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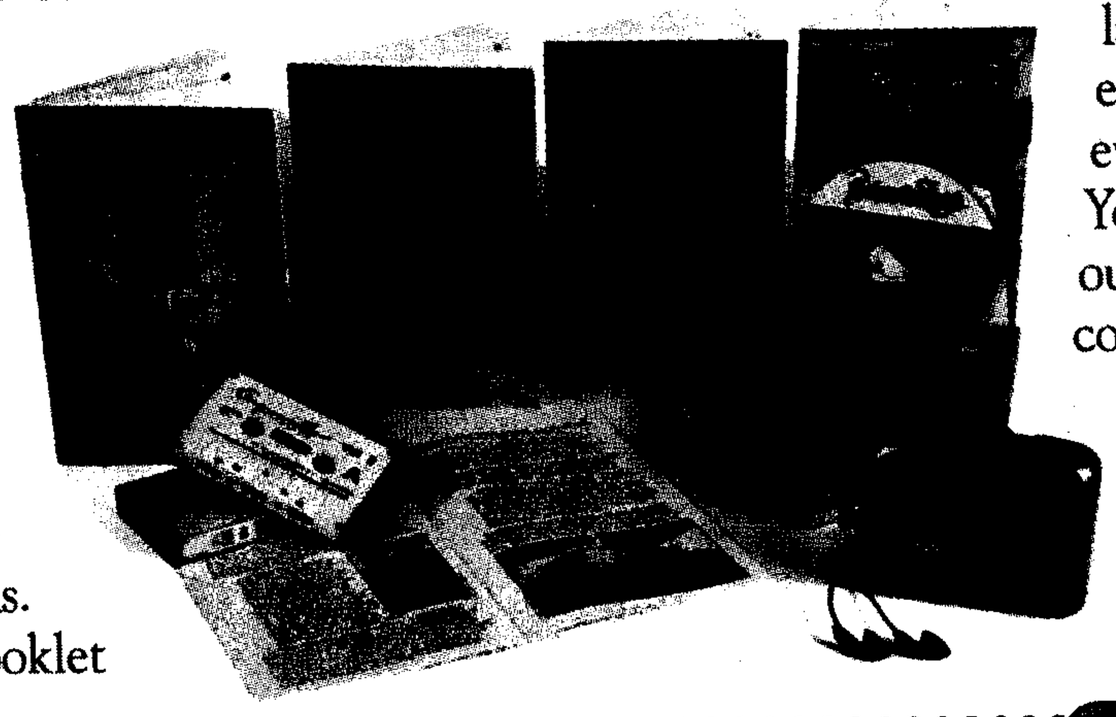

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Gnome

As Chairman of Independent GnomeVision TV, I am appalled to see the BBC gloating over their so-called victory in the Christmas ratings war.

There is one reason and one reason only why the BBC have for the first time ever registered more viewers than ITV, namely that they have slavishly copied the tasteless downmarket programmes which companies like my own have made famous.

The BBC is a quality channel with a remit to produce public service broadcasting which few people have any interest in.

Britain's viewers deserve a choice. It is a scandal that the BBC has been allowed to squander licence-payers' money on programmes which are every bit as bad as our own.

E. Strobes
pp. Lord Gnome
Chalet de Gnome
Gstaad
Switzerland

The Condliffe litigation might not be on a scale to compare with some of its epic libel battles, but it illustrates that the *Eye* is still prepared to go down fighting. "I don't think that Ian Hislop has ever deliberately stuck his head over the parapet," Desmond Browne notes. "But on the other hand, he has been extremely brave in fighting a case that was immeasurably hazardous in financial terms, and without any issue of pubic interest or principle arising from it."

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ABC

Ring in the News...

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SOON after Tony Blair's trip to Asia there will be two more officially supported missions to the region. But while the PM hopes to reduce the military build-up in India and Pakistan, these other visits are designed to do the exact opposite.

From 19 to 23 February, our high commission in Delhi is playing host to a group of British arms makers from the Defence Manufacturers' Association as they visit "Defexpo", a weapons fair in the city. Between 18 and 22 February, the high commission in Delhi and the British trade office in Bangalore are hosting another military-oriented trade mission organised by the Society of British Aerospace Companies. Jim Catchpole, the first secretary (defence supply) at the high commission will be on hand to help.

The brochure for the Defexpo exhibition boasts that among the wares on offer in Delhi will be "anti-aircraft guns, armour/anti-armour, artillery, howitzers & components, infantry combat vehicles, missile & missile systems, ordnance, pyrotechnics, small arms & ammunition and tanks". The organisers are keen to stress the opportunities for arms makers opened up by both the Kashmir and Afghan conflicts, boasting that "with the recent political developments taking place in the south east Asia region, India too has realised the need to strengthen its defence mechanism and streamline the defence forces."

Happily, they add, "a substantial increase in annual defence outlay all across is a growing phenomenon we're observing. In view of such developments, the introduction of an event like Defexpo India, which timed perfectly with the prevailing circumstances, only further acknowledged this fact".

British support for these military sales jaunts reflects the MoD's desire to exploit the India-Pakistan arms race for commercial advantage. The MoD has an agency, the Defence Export Sales Organisation (DESO), whose sole purpose is to sell British-made weapons to foreign armies – and which has targeted India and Pakistan as top customers. DESO's "strategic plan", which identifies 22 countries targeted for weapons sales, is supposed to be secret; but two years ago an official of the Defence Manufacturers' Association, angry at the temporary suspension of sales to Pakistan, told parliament that both India and Pakistan "have been identified by DESO as highly valuable priority markets for the United Kingdom industry to target".

The two February trade missions are only part of a stampede of government-backed arms dealers to the region. This time last year Britain had the largest international delegation at another marketplace for military goods, "Air India 2001". Jim Catchpole from the high commission was again on hand, asisted by the British high commissioner himself, Sir Rob Young, along with Tony Pawson, the director-general of defence exports from the MoD, and Air Marshal Sir John Day, commander-in-chief, RAF Strike Command (designate). More than 40 British firms came to sell their arms, including Westland, BAe, Smiths Industries and Cobham.

Meanwhile, licences for arms sales to Pakistan did slow slightly after General Musharaf's coup. But a condition for Pakistan's support in the Afghan conflict was the resumption of weapons exports. So if India and Pakistan do go to war, Britain will be following one of its finest traditions – arming both sides.

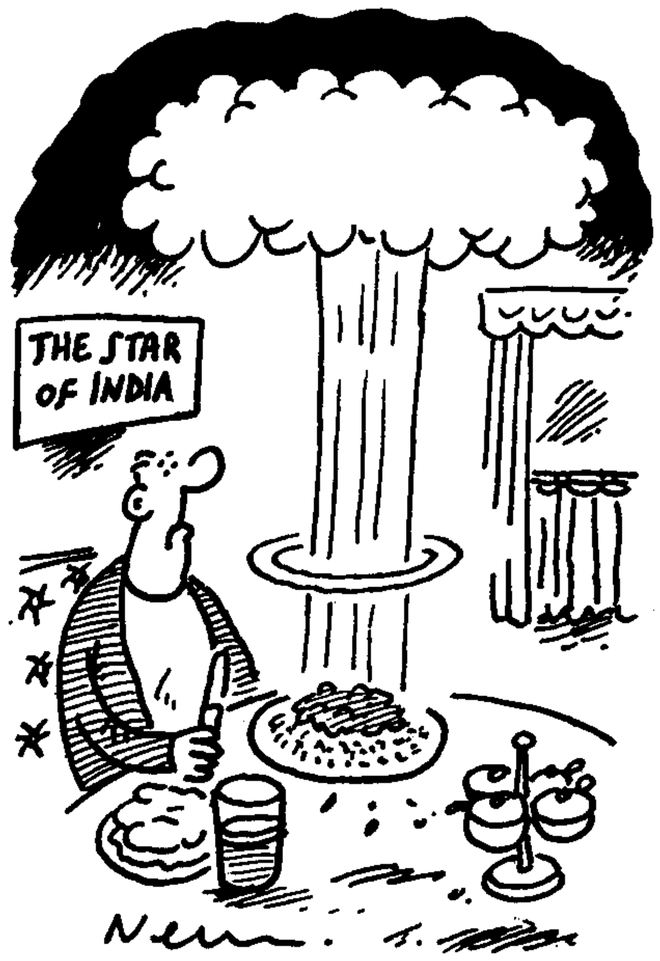
THE annual negotiations between the Queen and Downing Street over the content of Brenda's Christmas broadcast once again turned into a tussle between Her Maj's desire to concentrate on a traditional Christian message and Number 10's insistence on contemporary political correctness. As in previous years, George Carey, archbishop of Canterbury, was the Queen's sounding board as she toiled with her script.

Following her intensely personal broadcast of 2000, when she outlined her Christian beliefs, Downing Street insisted that the 2001 message had to be much more inclusive and refer to certain themes high on the current political agenda, such as racial tolerance. Buckingham Palace then agonised in case any faith group not mentioned by name by Brenda would feel insulted.

The original draft message played safe with a simple reference to those "of all faiths and none". But Brenda has never been one for being vague and, as it was deemed essential by Number 10 for her to refer to Islam by name, she insisted on naming all the other major world religions as well.

After that hurdle was crossed Brenda tried to ensure that her message contained a distinctly Christian element. With Carey's help she concentrated on the message of peace brought at Christmas and its relevance for everyone. But the closing sequence of royals "in action" to the accompaniment of "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" nearly didn't make it into the final version. Producers, senior flunkeys and media advisers agonised about whether this might be a bit too Christian for, er, Christmas. The Queen insisted that the angels should stay.

The royal heel also crushed another idea that was mooted at an early planning meeting. So used have we grown to hearing the national anthem and the "Star Spangled Banner" played side-by-side since 11 September that it was suggested that the American tune be included in full alongside a specially recorded clip of British and American flags flying together. Brenda simply shook her head and wrinkled her nose. No one pursued it further.



Street Of Shame

THERE were plenty of photographers but remarkably few shoppers at the opening of the Harrods sale last week – maybe because of the cold, or maybe because bargain-hunters didn't want to scrum down with Mohamed Fayed, Posh Spice and Fleet Street's finest.

According to a press release from Fayed's PR department, "it seemed the world had stopped what it was doing to travel to Knightsbridge to watch Victoria Beckham". As Steve Boggan wrote in the *Independent*, "if the population of the world were about 100, then that would be true". And so said all the other hacks.

Well, almost all. Hackette Claudia Goulder clearly attended a quite different event, reporting that Posh addressed "thousands of shoppers" and was "overwhelmed by the crowds". By happy coincidence, she works for the *Daily Express* – which has received tens of thousands of pounds' worth of advertising from Fayed ever since proprietor Richard "Dirty" Desmond became the Phoney Pharaoh's New Best Friend.

JUST FANCY THAT!

"The US is getting ready to bomb Somalia, intelligence officials say, because about 100 al Qaeda terrorists have bases there."
— Jeremy Campbell, page 2, *Evening Standard*, 3 January.

"Plans for the next stage of the campaign against terrorism in Yemen, Somalia and Iraq will be put on hold." — Robert Fox, page 8, *Evening Standard*, 3 January.

ITN's Lauren Taylor is standing in the rain outside Nafplion prison, Greece, where the 12 British planespotters are about to be released. Suddenly a Mercedes pulls up at the gates and out steps a beautiful young woman in Prada boots.

Assuming this is an official from the British embassy, Taylor rushes forward. "Hello madam, can I possibly interview you about the planespotters?" To which the woman replies: "I'm Lucie Morris from the *Daily Mail*."

As the spotters then board a bus hired by the *Mail*, things become rather heated. "You don't own the prisoners!" Taylor yells, stamping her feet. She persuades hapless British consul Donald Holder on to the bus to tell the spotters to get off and pose for ITN. "No, we're staying with Lucie," they reply.

A furious Taylor can only watch as the bus door closes and Morris speeds off to Athens with her assembled scoop – while the consul and MEP Richard Howitt chase behind, desperate to appear in the *Mail*'s group picture at the Plaza Hotel.

When the photo is taken, however, one spotter is missing. It seems he got left behind in the mayhem. A chance for Taylor to salvage something? Er, no: he is quickly snapped up by a hack from Central TV.

IN THE *Daily Express* of 28 December, sports hack Mark Fleming found a most arresting opening sentence for his piece about football refereeing. "When Albert Einstein said 'For every action there is an equal but opposite reaction', he was blissfully ignorant of premiership referees."

Not half as ignorant as Fleming about premiership scientists, however. As any fule kno, this is in fact one of the laws of motion proposed by Isaac Newton a mere 250 years or so earlier.

HACKWATCH

Humpty Dumpster

"THE *Mail* diary has brought readers an unrivalled service from around the world in the past year." So boasted Nigel Dempster in the annual round-up of his top scoops for the new year's eve edition of the *Daily Mail*. Here are a few of the stories he picked out, plus one or two others that had somehow slipped his mind.

January 2001: Dempster "can reveal" that Canadian scrap metal merchant Herbert Black, 56, is the man in the life of Denise Rich, ex-wife of billionaire and former fugitive Marc Rich. And indeed he can reveal it – not least because he's read the same story in the Page Six gossip column of the *New York Post* four days earlier.

February: "Last Saturday, after England's magnificent 44-15 victory over Wales in Cardiff, I was breathalysed and will be required to attend court later this month," Dempster reveals. "My solicitor, Robin Falvey, says: 'My client will plead "Not Guilty".' See you all in court." Curiously, he omits this exclusive from his new year summary. Even more curious is the implication that the arrest took place in Cardiff. Dumpster was in fact detained near his home in west London, 10 minutes before the end of the rugby match in Wales.

March: "Russian tennis star Anna Kournikova is so desperate to sell her $4.5 million, four-storey duplex in Miami's South Beach – complete with Gianni Versace-designed doors and a rooftop swimming pool – that she is showing prospective buyers around the place herself. The latest person to look over the property in the Portofino building, which was constructed by Thomas Kramer, was Jeff Forster of a New York financial firm. The pad also features a massive mahogany bar and a wall unit." Never mind that this was again filched from the *New York Post*'s gossip column: Dumpster is so proud of his discovery that he includes it in his annual highlights.

April: "Playwright Sir Harold Pinter has not forgotten his humble roots in London's East End..." When the next day's *Independent* points out that Pinter isn't "Sir Harold", Dumpster blows a gasket. "It's a pity some people can't see a joke when it hits them in the eye," he writes. "Realising what a great man he is, I have given him a knighthood... Make of it what you will." Ah, *that* sort of joke. Meanwhile, on 17 April Dempster "reveals" that American cosmetics tycoon Ron Perelman has won custody of his daughter after a long and bitter lawsuit – a mere five days after all the details have appeared in the *New York Post*. This doesn't prevent Nigel from citing the story again on new year's eve as an example of his "unrivalled service from around the world".

June: Whoops! "On 21 March, from Dubai, I published a story which suggested that Sheikh Mohammed, Crown Prince of Dubai, occasionally bets on his horses. This, I now understand, is completely untrue. Of course, as a Moslem, His Highness does not bet and has never organised or arranged a bet. In the High Court in London yesterday I and the *Daily Mail* apologised to His Highness for the error... We accept that this allegation was deeply offensive to him as a practising Moslem and prominent member of the Islamic community." Oddly, this great achievement is omitted from the year-end extravaganza.

July: Whoops again! "Following my story on 18 June, 'Secret buried with Mr JCB', it has been pointed out to me that J C Bamford Excavators Ltd do not force out staff over the age of 58. I fully accept that their early retirement scheme benefits staff who want to retire before they are 65 and I apologise to the company and its chairman, Sir Anthony Bamford, for any impression given to the contrary."

August: "More than one person thinks that the domestic goddess, widowed mother-of-two Nigella Lawson, is pregnant, but not her escort Charles Saatchi." A great story – or non-story, as the case may be – which Dumpster understandably includes among his "scoops of the year".

September: "Peter Burrell, agent to many celebrities, leaves his wife Lucinda." Hmm. Still, it is September.

October: Even in his Greatest Hits compilation, Dempster can find only one item from the whole month worth repeating. But it's a cracker: "Lord Ivar Mountbatten, who sold Moyns Park, his Essex stately home, to Baron Steven Bentinck, is amazed to hear that the Grade-1 listed house is on the market for almost double after four years."

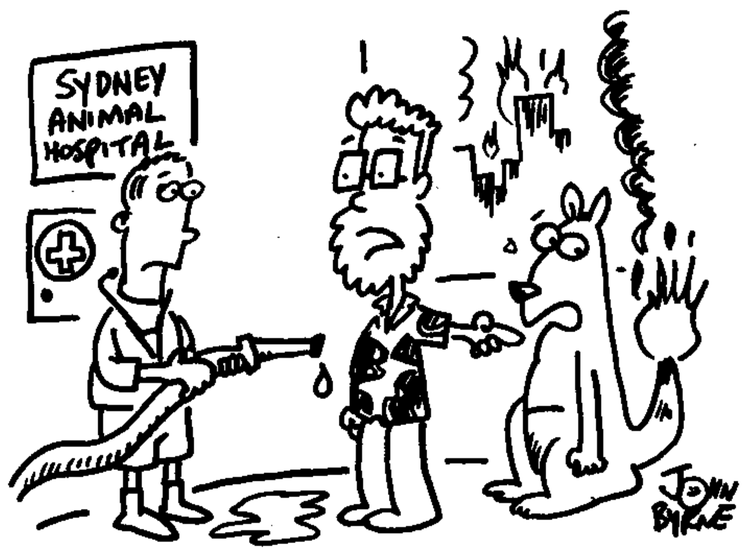
November: A torrent of astounding disclosures: former Christie's boss Sir Anthony Tennant has had a 71st birthday party in London; designer Stella McCartney is holidaying in Majorca with her boyfriend; the Duke of Gloucester has retired as a commissioner of English Heritage...

December: The Duke of Westminster tells Dempster that he once met Liz Hurley at a charity event in Chester. There's no suggestion that he's her lover, still less the father of her baby, but Nigel does have some extra disclosures: "The Duke's wife, Tally, has been in the Argentine with their two eldest daughters, and was visited by her mother, Georgina, fresh from seeing Fidel Castro in Cuba." In his round-up on 31 December, he rightly calls this his "scoop of the year".

How can he top that? Watch this space in a year's time. If Dumpster is sacked between now and then, we can be sure of one thing: as ever, he'll be the last to know.

THE *Sunday Telegraph's* coverage of who will take over from Dr George Carey as Archbishop of Canterbury included thumbnail sketches of the seven most likely candidates.

The absence of a byline attached to the profiles, however, was surely unconnected to the fact that they were penned by one Andrew Carey, the archbish's journalist son?



"Hose me kangaroo down, sport"

FOR years now Relate spokeswoman turned agony aunt Zelda West-Meads has been advising *Mail on Sunday* readers. They can even telephone her "or one of her experienced counsellors for a personal response... to marital, relationship or sexual problems". The calls are charged at the normal BT daytime rate.

Now the *Sunday Express* has introduced a similar hotline, the rag's new agony aunt being Jane O'Gorman – aka the editor's wife. Her readers can chat to equally experienced counsellors about whatever takes their fancy. "Press 1 for sexual guidance with problems such as erection difficulties, premature ejaculation, lack of orgasm... Press 2 for counselling with problems such as infidelity, relationship breakdown, stress..." and so on.

The difference is that calls to the *Express* line cost £1.50 a minute. After 20 minutes the problem should be solved and the call terminated, but if not readers can ring back for another £30 session.

At £90 an hour the advice should be good. Alternatively there are always the live sex lines advertised in *Express* owner Richard Desmond's top-shelf publications, which offer "good phone" for just £1 per minute.

"I'm afraid it's Tinselitis, Fairy Godmother"

A LAST-MINUTE contender for 2001's OBN of the Year award is the quiz in the *New Statesman*'s Christmas and New Year issue, which asked readers to unscramble anagrams of "some of this year's most prominent figures".

Along with "O, I'm an evil, cold boss" (Slobodan Milosevic) "He bugs Gore" (George Bush) and "I'm a Tory plan B" (Tony Blair MP) is "Liberty Pew" – which turns out to be an anagram of that immensely prominent figure Peter Wilby, editor of the *New Statesman*.

***INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY* hack Simon O'Hagan, sent to do the rounds of squiffy staff "snogging and falling over" in London for a feature on office parties, attended one photographic agency's bash at which the boss made a speech about how the Christmas party was important because it was an opportunity for the firm to make its many freelance contributors feel appreciated.**

"The freelance everythings who are a growing part of the capital's workforce would surely recognise that," wrote O'Hagan approvingly.

And no more so than those who work beside O'Hagan at the *Independent* titles, where the management again showed its appreciation to dozens of regular freelance reporters and subs by pointedly not inviting them to the Christmas party.

CLICHEWATCH

"IT IS a truth universally acknowledged that a single Tory in possession of a marginal seat must be in want of a wife." Thus begins the diary by teenage columnist Michael Gove in last week's *Spectator*.

It is another truth universally acknowledged that only a truly desperate and cliché-infested hack recycles Jane Austen's famous phrase. But the contributors to the *Spectacularlyboring*, poor dears, still think it is the mark of a stylish essayist. "While it may be a truth universally acknowledged that fine words butter no parsnips," Simon Courtauld observed in the issue of 1 December 2001, "I have to say that in my experience parsnips are seldom cooked in butter."

A few weeks earlier, on 6 October, Taki had a go: "It is a truth universally acknowledged that the Belgian foreign minister, Louis Michel, was born of a union between a cockroach and a cow. Michel threatened to make Austria a pariah when the sweetest people in Europe voted for the big bad wolf Jorg Haider."

And who penned this elegant opening paragraph in the *Spectator* of 11 August last year? "It is a truth universally acknowledged that a prime minister in possession of a good majority must be in want of an enemy. And Tony Blair has now found his foe where so many of his predecessors have: across the Channel."

Step forward, Michael Gove.

ROGUES' GALLERY: THOSE HONOURS IN FULL

THE "Easy Listening" aspects of the new year's honours – with gongs for Sade, the Bee Gees and Jimmy Young – drew most comment. But behind the stars lay the usual gang of rather less fluffy characters.

Major General Alan Sharman, who runs arms-lobby organisation the Defence Manufacturers' Association, won a CBE. The award recognises Sharman's successful battle to let his members sell weapons to India, Pakistan and Israel, despite pressure in parliament. It also reflects his efforts to stop MPs seeing arms export licences before they are granted.

Peter McLoughlin of British Aerospace picked up an OBE. McLoughlin is the company's UK "government affairs director" or in-house lobbyist. His firm's recent successful bid to sell poor Tanzania an expensive military air traffic system justifies the honour by itself. The fact that BAe financially supports the Labour party is entirely coincidental.

Another BAe salesman, regional marketing director Brian Tucker, also came away with an OBE. Other arms manufacturers picking up honours included Richard Case of Westland – which makes Apache helicopters – with an MBE; Alex Dorrian – in charge of British relations for French arms firm Thales, which also gives "£5,000 or more" to Labour – with a CBE; Keith Fullagar, a technical director for Rolls Royce military business, with an OBE. MBEs also went to Derek Turnbull, a project manager for Vickers Defence Systems; Lionel Steele, an international sales manager for armoured car maker Alvis; John Williamson, managing director of Giro Engineering, which makes pipes for warships; and Robert Parkinson, from BAe-owned military satellite maker Astrium.

Of course it wasn't just arms dealers who had cause for celebration: the list also honoured some of Labour's less successful chums. Albert Bore, leader of Birmingham council, is the main campaigner for directly elected mayors who can sign deals with private firms over councillors' heads, but he has had a rough year. The ministers' darling failed to convince either his fellow councillors or voters: a Birmingham-wide referendum rejected a mayor, as did 89 out of 117 councillors. However, whom the public rejects the honours system rewards… and so Bore started the new year with a knighthood.

The honours also reflected Labour's passion for privatisation. Downing Street reaffirmed its plans to hand over the NHS to private firms by giving a CBE to Valerie Gooding, chief executive of Alan Milburn's new favourites, BUPA. Alan Craig, an executive director of leading PFI firm Babtie, picked up an OBE. The fact that former Babtie manager Deirdre Wells was appointed to the department of transport, local government and regions' "strategic partnering taskforce" last October suggests the company's future is bright indeed.

Several of Labour's greatest cock-ups generated honours. The government is already bailing out the private consortium which took over air traffic control (NATS), and the new owners are sacking staff and cutting pension payments. So Bill Semple, the NATS chairman who backed the privatisation and now sits on the new board, naturally picked up a CBE. Semple has had plenty of experience in disasters, as the man in charge of the dismal, delayed Swanwick control centre.

Bob Eagle, who runs the "National Asylum Support Scheme" for the home office, picked up a CBE. Bob is in charge of the hated voucher scheme and the discredited "dispersal" system whereby asylum seekers are sent to be bullied in isolated, run-down hotels and ruined council blocks. Dr Sue Ion, from the board of the leaky and soon-to-be-privatised BNFL, picked up an OBE.

Most amusing of all was the OBE awarded for "services to public transport" to Tony Depledge, the development director of Arriva – the company which recently incurred a £2m fine from the strategic rail authority (SRA) after it cut hundreds of train services. The firm couldn't run the trains because it had not hired or trained enough drivers. Plenty of scope for "development" there, then.

TUCKED away in the diplomatic honours list was an MBE for Geoffrey Martin, outgoing head of the European Commission's office in London. Geoff is best known for his regular appearances on the *Today* programme and his pamphlets exposing "Euromyths".

No myth has more annoyed the Ulster-born Martin than the suggestion that EU funds for his native land were being creamed off by Northern Irish terrorists, as well as more conventional criminals. His confidence that this was media fiction took a slight knock when the then RUC raided the offices of EPIC, an EU-funded group supposedly rehabilitating loyalists released from the H-blocks, and found weapons rather than textbooks. Now the auditor-general for Northern Ireland has released a report which examines five such EU-backed schemes.

EPIC was found to have interpreted the rules in such a way as to get £170,659 of European social fund dosh for non-existent business activities, including a phantom mobile chip-shop which was supposedly using ex-terrorists as fish-fryers.

Even more imaginative, although apparently not linked to terrorism, was the fraudulent use of £90,000 by Playboard, a Belfast charity supposedly training unemployed females under the EU's "New Opportunities for Women" scheme. The auditor discovered that six of those into whose bank accounts the loot from Brussels was paid were actually men, and Inspector Knacker is now expected to begin an investigation.

MANY congratulations to our old friend Timothy "Tim O'Shanter" Clifford, head of the National Galleries of Scotland, who was granted a knighthood in the new year honours for "services to the arts".

There have been many such services, as *Eye* readers may recall. In 1996, for instance, we revealed that he had sold his private collection of Renaissance and Baroque medals despite a clear rule in the Museums Association's ethics code that "museum professionals must not deal (buy or sell for profit) in material covered by [their] institution's collecting policy". The Museums Association slapped poor Tim's wrists, noting that "his actions have put him into a position where his conduct has been brought into question".

In 1998 Tim lent a large number of artworks from the National Galleries to Lord Irvine of Lairg for three years – despite a warning from his head of conservation that works on paper should only be shown for three months or so to avoid damage from light. "I am the director and I make decisions," Tim replied tetchily. "I am an expert on graphic material." Alas! Despite his expertise, no fewer than 1,000 drawings in his care at the NGS – including Leonardos and Raphaels – were then found in boxes covered in mould and affected by damp.

Also in 1998 the *Eye* revealed that Tim had been rebuked by his own trustees for "unprofessional conduct" after appointing a young woman as "deputy keeper" at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery without advertising the job or interviewing anyone for it. The trustees declared that Tim's behaviour was "less than is to be expected of a senior administrative officer".

But not, it now seems, less than we expect of a knight of the realm. Can the directorship of the National Gallery in London be far behind?

IN THE *Daily Mail* on 1 January, diarist Ephraim Hardcastle (aka Peter McKay) expressed his horror at the news that "Blairite historian Ben Pimlott" had become "a surprise recipient of a knighthood". Pimlott must have been pretty surprised too, since he hasn't actually been given a knighthood (yet), which might explain why no other paper reported the news.

Could it be that McHackey, still recovering from the Hogmanay celebrations, had somehow confused Ben Pimlott with the actor Ben Kingsley?

A DESPERATE plea appears among the small ads in the *Mid Sussex Times*. "WANTED. The local Conservative Association is looking for new blood on its committee. Only a few meetings a year and nothing arduous. Anyone anxious to help should contact Julia Burgoyne..."

Well, it depends what you mean by arduous: potential applicants should be warned that this is the constituency of Nicholas "Fatty" Soames MP.

SUPERMARKET boss Terry Leahy, the newly-knighted chairman of Tesco, used the opportunity of a CBI conference in November to whinge about the problems which the current planning process poses to his company.

He made particular reference to an application by Tesco to build a new supermarket on the site of a former women's hospital in Clapham, south London, which remained unresolved after four years and two public inquiries in the face of considerable public opposition. At the same conference planning minister Lord Falconer pledged to make the planning system more friendly.

Sure enough on 11 December, a date sufficiently close to Christmas to ensure minimum coverage, Falconer granted the Clapham Tesco planning permission on condition that there would be fewer new parking spaces than originally intended.

Surely former dome minister Charlie Falconer's keen desire to lick Leahy's boots has nothing to do with Tesco's £12m sponsorship of the dome's Learning Zone? And surely this decision, which will boost Tesco's competitiveness against its rivals, is unconnected to Leahy's seat on the government's competitiveness think-tank?

ONE of the less publicised government promotions after last year's election was that of Geoffrey Filkin, former husband of Elizabeth Filkin, the parliamentary standards person who has so infuriated so many people in parliament by insisting MPs obey their own rules on declaration of interests.

After a long career in local government, Geoffrey Filkin got a peerage in 1999, and after the last election became the government spokesman in the Lords on local government and transport. His brief includes the recent nasty dispute between the pilots on the Humber and their employers, the Association of British Ports, a private company with strong associations with the Tory party.

Faced on 19 November with an array of anxious questions from Labour peers worried about the strike and the overwhelming support it has among the qualified pilots, Lord Filkin courageously refused to take sides and did not flinch from putting the company's point of view. Asked about the training given to the strike-breakers on the Humber, he replied: "As I understand it, the harbour authority has recruited a substantial number of experienced seafarers who have maritime certificates... I am fairly confident that advice is being given by experienced seafarers with a capacity to give such training."

This rather cautious confidence has not reassured the striking pilots as they observe the collisions and chaos caused by the unqualified people who are guiding big ships down the treacherous waters of the Humber.

WEST LB, the German bank bidding for Railtrack, is an unknown quantity to most British travellers. But it stands a good chance of taking over the tracks.

Transport secretary Stephen Byers' as yet unformed scheme for a non-profit "company limited by guarantee" to run the rails will have to be tested against the West LB bid. Should chancellor Gordon Brown decide that handing Railtrack to the German bankers will be a cheaper option for the treasury, he is unlikely to put Byers' political future before his own "Prudence".

West LB – short for West Landesbank – is used to dealing with politicians. In Germany its generosity caused a scandal last year when it was revealed that a flock of SPD politicians had accepted free flights from the bank. Current German president Johannes Rau shamefacedly admitted to having accepted 44 flights. All told the bank arranged at least 110 flights, including holiday jaunts, for SPD big wigs.

One powerful regional politician, Heinz Schlusser, had to resign after confessing that some of the flights were for himself and a female passenger who wasn't his wife. Schlusser was also suspected of tipping off West LB in 1996 that a posse of 600 tax inspectors was about to raid the bank in a drive against tax evasion. The investigation into Schlusser was discontinued for lack of evidence.

West LB needed good relations with politicians to defend its interests. This year, for example, the European Union fined the bank 1.5 billion Deutschmarks (about half a billion pounds) for receiving illegal government subsidies. Ironically, West LB is in fact itself a state-owned bank. So should Gordon decide to hand over Railtrack he will at least be making Britain's railways into a state-owned asset once more – er, the state in question being Germany.

ONE glance at Kevin Bond's illustrious career as managing director of Yorkshire Water (see *Eyes passim*) shows that David Blunkett's decision to appoint him head of the new police standards unit at the unprecedented civil service salary of £200,000 a year is no less than inspired.

Blunkett justified Bond's enormous fat cat salary (far greater than that of the prime minister or the home secretary himself) by saying he would bring "a valuable new perspective to improving standards".

In 1996 Bond certainly brought a new perspective to improving standards when he turned from gamekeeper, as head of the National Rivers Authority, the body responsible for prosecuting water companies for pollution, to poacher, as managing director of Yorkshire Water. He joined the water company shortly after it infamously "ran out of water". Three years later Yorkshire Water was still seeking to use emergency orders to take millions of gallons of water from local rivers.

His other achievements included promoting activities such as property development and waste disposal which had nothing to do with water and were therefore safe from the watchful eye of Ofwat, and overseeing the company's name change from Yorkshire Water to the much prettier Kelda Group.

During Bond's time at Yorkshire Water, a subsidiary company, Babcock Engineering, was fined £7,000 plus £7,000 costs for allowing sulphuric acid from water treatment works to pollute a stream feeding trout lakes on the famous Harewood Estate killing more than 1,000 fish. He managed to get out, however, before the company faced charges of supplying homes in Leeds and Bradford with water unfit for humans to drink, although the alleged offences took place during his time as MD. This was a wise move as Yorkshire Water was fined £80,000 plus £125,000 costs after pleading guilty to 17 counts of supplying water unfit for human consumption.

RYAN
& SON
ARE OPEN ALL THROUGHOUT CHRISTMAS AND THE NEW YEAR FOR ALL YOUR PLUMBING AND HEATING NEEDS
Not Open Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day
Advertisement, Liverpool Echo

ONE big idea to come out of the lengthy report into last summer's race riots was that immigrants should be made to swear an oath of allegiance before being allowed to live in Britain.

Welcoming the report by Ted Cantle and his team, home office minister John Denham said the government "wasn't committed to a formal oath" but would welcome a debate. Community leaders complained that the idea was racist and divisive.

Er... except that ministers, officials, immigration groups and pundits all seem to have overlooked the fact that immigrants have been swearing a formal oath of allegiance for the past 20 years to obtain citizenship. The British nationality act 1981 requires any would-be British citizen to go before a commissioner of oaths and say: "I, XXX, swear by Almighty God that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, her heirs and successors, according to the law."

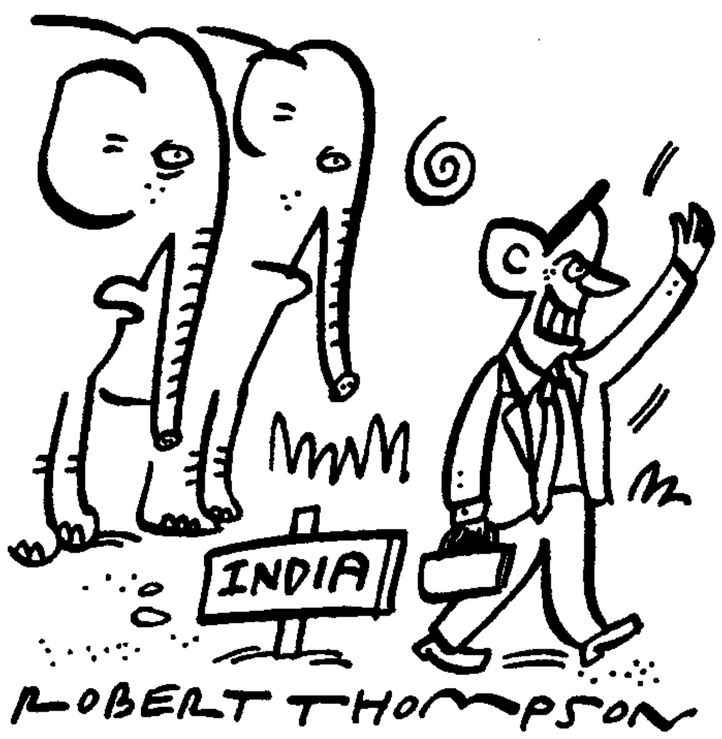
TUC NEWS

THE UK's biggest trade union Unison campaigns up and down the country to prevent its 1.3m members from being bullied or harassed by employers. But now the union is itself in the middle of a bitter row over a bullying case involving its Welsh regional secretary Derek Gregory.

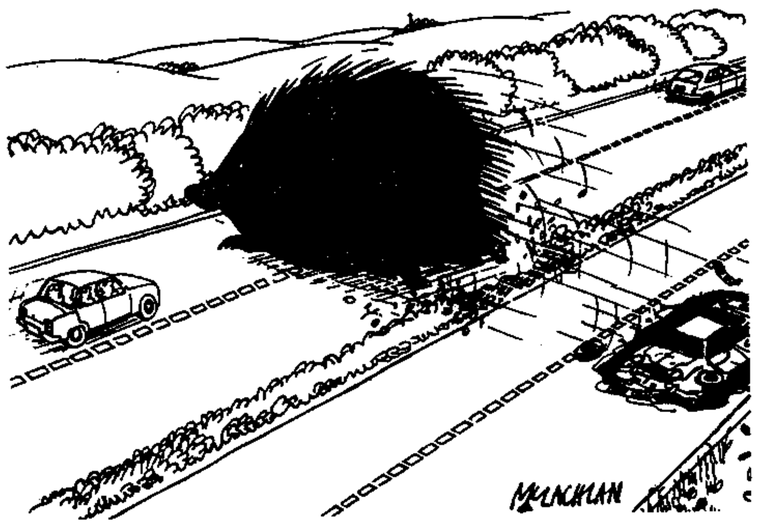
In November Gregory's former secretary Joy Pugh was awarded £90,000 in compensation by Swansea county court after she accused Gregory and his assistant Beverly Cole of bullying and harassment. Unison's general secretary Dave Prentis has rejected calls from union members to suspend Gregory, because both he and Cole have already been cleared of any wrongdoing by an internal inquiry.

Unison has, however, launched an investigation into the events surrounding Mrs Pugh's court case. A Unison spokeswoman told the *Eye*: "It's not an investigation into Gregory and Cole, it's an investigation into events. We cannot suspend everybody and everything."

Meanwhile Unison's London regional secretary, Chris Humphreys, has been suspended on full pay while an internal inquiry is conducted into complaints made against him, but the spokeswoman insists the two cases are completely separate.



"British? Naah... he's African, you can tell by the ears"



ROAD RAGE

HOW long does a "new" Labour strategy last? About 18 months if multinational businesses don't like it.

In March 2000 Tony Blair launched a road safety strategy called "Tomorrow's Roads – Safer for Everyone". It committed his government to pushing for a European directive in 2000 to make car fronts less likely to inflict serious injury or death on pedestrians. "This… could ultimately reduce fatalities and serious injuries to pedestrians by up to 20 percent," it was claimed. "Such a directive would also be the best way of preventing particularly dangerous bullbars being fitted to vehicles."

Nothing happened in 2000. Tests for vehicle fronts which have been developed since 1978 were still ignored by the European union. If all EU cars had to pass those tests, an estimated 2,000 deaths would be averted each year. Since 1992 the (elected) European parliament has demanded a directive making the tests mandatory but the (non-elected) European commission has resisted.

The problem is that car makers want the freedom to style vehicle fronts in the most appealing way to sell ever more cars that are over-engineered and needlessly expensive. The cost of providing safer fronts is minimal: the Honda Civic, for example, is the only car that passes 70 percent of the tests and the manufacturing cost of the extra safety provision is £6.50 per car.

Car makers *have* improved safety for occupants over the past 20 years. Better safety for driver and baby has great marketing potential, but cars aren't advertised as being safer for someone else's child or granny as they hit the bonnet.

So last month the commission and council of ministers reached a "voluntary agreement" with the motor industry which includes only a fraction of the tests and doesn't even make them compulsory. The acquiescence of the council's British minister – transport secretary Stephen Byers and trade secretary Patricia Hewitt – shows how "new" Labour has already diluted its road-safety strategy, which was fairly pathetic in the first place (*Eye* 997).

The voluntary agreement doesn't even ban bullbars, the metal grids some drivers have on the front of their cars to make them look more threatening on the school run. Away from the Australian outback they have no practical function, but by concentrating pressure points they make a car's impact on a person's body more severe, and injury and death more likely.

Indeed, bullbars on bulky 4x4 vehicles seem designed to cause maximum damage to children. But the voluntary agreement merely says that from next year cars will not be sold with bullbars already attached; anyone who wants bullbars will be free to buy them separately, or even with their new vehicle, and have them attached afterwards.

To "new" Labour bullbars are evidently not as dangerous as the mighty road lobby whose freedom to make massive profits must be maintained at all costs.

'Hedgehog'

EDUCASHUN NEWZ

THE ex-lecturer Elizabeth Hall, who operates an "academic rescue" service over her website, researching and writing academic dissertations on demand with no questions asked (see *Eye 1043*), has a chequered past, according to the *Times Higher Education Supplement*.

The *THES* reports that Ms Hall taught on the City and Guilds teacher training certificate at the University of Central England before taking long term sick leave from 1994-5 and eventually early retirement. She returned to the university to work in the corporate development centre but did not pass her three-month probationary period after she was disciplined and dismissed following complaints from colleagues.

She appealed against this dismissal and was reinstated, but proceeded to take more sick leave until she had used up all her entitlement and resigned in 1996. She now sells essays to students via the internet charging between £35 and £50 an hour, a service which has been condemned by the department for education and skills (DfES) following press coverage.

The DfES might also like to turn its attention to Finchley Law Tutors, a firm which runs an internet service called the Law Essay Bank (http://knowledge.co.uk/lawessays/) selling ready-made law essays from £30, and custom-made ones from £100. The website carries a disclaimer stating: "As a professional body we do not support plagiarism, materials may only be used for individuals' sole purposes as revision study aids only. Under no circumstances should anyone attempt to pass the work off as their own."

Despite this warning most universities have placed a block on the site, fearing the temptation it presents to students is too great. But according to the firm's founder Dee James, while lecturers don't want their students buying the essays, they are only too happy to order sample essays and lecture notes themselves. Perhaps the DfES should consider dispensing with higher education altogether and simply replace costly, resource-draining universities with internet cafés.

LUTON University has now removed the names of politics and history lecturers which remained on its website long after they had been made redundant (see *Eye 1042*), but it appears that other respected institutions are guilty of the same offence.

When Graham Collier decided to leave his post as artistic director of jazz at the Royal Academy of Music after 10 years, he was asked to retain his links to the academy as an international consultant for a further three years. But after just one year his consultancy was terminated in April 2000. Nevertheless Graham Collier's name, a considerable draw to prospective jazz students, appeared in the academy's prospectus published the following June. His name also remained on the academy's website despite his repeated requests to remove it.

Collier consulted a solicitor who told him that under UK law there was no action he could take to force the academy's hand. Finally, in November 2000 his name was removed, but Collier was so outraged by the affair that he sent back his prestigious honorary membership "awarded to distinguished musicians for their services to the Academy".

Apology – Mrs Sylvia Stirling

IN our edition dated 2-15 November 2001 we published an article under the heading "Educashun Newz" in which we alleged that Mrs Sylvia Stirling was dismissed as finance officer of the University of Reading following financial problems at the university.

We now accept that such allegations are wholly untrue. In fact, Mrs Stirling was never the finance officer of the University of Reading but held the post of Senior Assistant Registrar (Planning). Mrs Stirling was not dismissed by the university.

We are happy to set the record straight and to apologise to Mrs Stirling for the distress and embarrassment caused to her.

Down on the Fish Farm

MORE bad news for Scotland's foreign-owned fake salmon farmers – this time from Norwegian research scientist Hilde Hedal. She notes that "some radioactive substances in the food chain show a tenfold increase over levels in 1994... the increase of radioactivity in seawater is a source of worry."

Ms Hedal thinks the cause is obvious. "Sellafield [UKAEA plant in Cumbria] has increased releases of technetium* in seawater. Other sources of this type do not exist." If this is so, then tainted seawater must pass through West Highland and Islands fish farms on the way to Norway, and being closer to the alleged contamination source, substances in it must be less "diluted". Has the Scottish Executive (SE) tested farm salmon for evidence of technetium?

The national health service has also voiced alarm over an increase in cases of cancer, particularly of testicular cancer: up 41 percent since 1988. Studies in Ireland suggest the incidence of testicular cancer among Irish fish farm workers is unusually high. It is alleged this may be related to their contact with toxic chemicals used to control disease in farm salmon cages.

Has the SE tested Scottish workers for any evidence of an increased incidence of testicular cancer? In Canada, hundreds of thousands of Atlantic farm salmon are being killed by infectious hematopietic necrosis (HIN) – on some sites last year at a rate of 200,000 per month. Keith Bullough, of Omega Salmon Group, said: "We do have concern with HIN... it's not something new, this has happened before here and it's naturally occurring in the wild." HIN attacks the kidneys and spleen of fish but is not transferable to humans. Has the SE identified HIN in Scotland's salmon farms?

Still in Canada, biologist Otto Langer, until recently a top government fisheries scientist, has condemned a report by his former employers denying that salmon farms cause sea lice infestations in wild fish. Langer said the report "is more cover-up than science" and that that government's "covering up for the aquaculture industry has to stop." But according to UK government official I.M. Whitelaw, there has been a "considerable amount of research and development" not to mention "regulatory activity", and everything is under control. So that's all right then. Well, no, actually it isn't, because these assurances were given in 1988. More than a decade later the Scottish Executive still trots out these same sad lies.

'Old Trout'

* Technetium: the chemical element of atomic number 43 (Tc), the first element to be artificially made.

"Good news, Mr Bolsover – we think you have a definite case against the surgeon who carried out your laser operation."

FIVE TV

Shackleton (Channel 4)

ONE of the problems with discussions over whether television is better or worse than it used to be is the difficulty of comparing like with like.

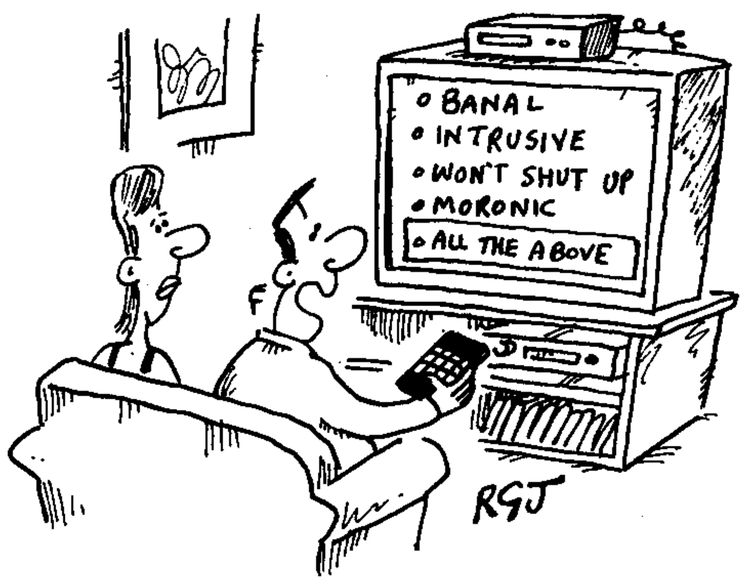
While economists have conversion tables for measuring the cost of a 1912 pint of ale against one bought today, TV usually involves too many variables of technical quality and subjective audience response. Unusually, though, there's now the chance of comparing two shows which are pretty near cheese and cheese, chalk and chalk, despite the separation of a decade and a half.

In 1985, Central television made *The Last Place On Earth*, a big-budget dramatisation of the expeditions of Captain Scott. Channel 4 has just seen in 2002 with another Antarctic exploration drama, the most expensive fiction commission in the network's history: **Shackleton**. Both pieces feature stiff-upper lips becoming frostbitten and lovingly photographed snowscapes. But the difference in ambition and attitude between the two projects tells a depressing story of the history of television in the intervening period.

The *Last Place On Earth* was paid for and scheduled by the most populist television network then in existence – ITV – yet was a genuinely subversive piece of work. Scripted by Trevor Griffiths – one of the most politically radicalised dramatists of the period – the drama used Scott's story to attack the British imperialism and disproportionate historical self-importance which had seen an unexpected resurrection in the Falklands adventure only five years previously. One episode was even titled "Rejoice!", picking up on Mrs Thatcher's mid-war cry.

Oates's altruistic act taught to generations of empire schoolchildren – "I am just going outside..." – was depicted as a man going out for a piss. It was daring, dangerous stuff, challenging the attitudes prevailing in both television and politics.

And now comes *Shackleton*, which is the perfect reverse. Financed by a network which was set up to be subversive and distinctive, this four-hour epic is an exercise in populist conservatism. It's written and directed by Charles Sturridge, who made his name with *Brideshead Revisited* on the old ITV and then *Longitude*, which won awards for Channel 4 and convinced them to tip open the piggy bank for this. Sturridge makes elegant pieces of heritage television which go down well with a snack and a decent glass of claret but it's impossible to see how they fit Channel 4's remit to be diverse and dangerous.



"...and with this digital sports channel you get a choice of commentators"

Whereas Griffiths in *The Last Place On Earth* used a historical story to goad and criticise the politicians of the day, Sturridge won't allow any such metaphors space on the sledge. Though Shackleton's expeditions ran parallel with the First World War – and Channel 4 is marking the 20th anniversary of the Falklands War in other programmes at the moment – there's no use of political counterpoint except for a vaguely Spielbergian nostalgia for the days when chaps were tested in adversity.

In fact, where Griffiths used an ice-pick to poke Thatcher, Sturridge seems desperate to snuggle up in Blair's tent. The right-wing press have complained that the explorer's frost-bitten feet contain two much clay in this dramatisation – he's an adulterer and a bit of a cad at times – but the key calculation in Kenneth Branagh's performance is vocal.

His Shackleton doesn't sound remotely Edwardian but rather has the crisp, classless hello-mate tones of the most recent graduates of RADA and Labour's Millbank HQ. Indeed, apart from the moral frailties, Ken's explorer essentially is Tony Blair, though one who happens to be living on whale blubber rather than polenta: a regular guy who may seem to be a bit of a prat at times but has this way of getting the job done.

While the *Daily Mail* frets about the inclusion of the occasional unpleasant detail about Shackleton, the writing and performance are astonishingly reverential when measured against television drama of the 1970s. This Shack isn't a toff and really is something of a hero.

Beyond its "new" Labour hero, the drama is deeply and depressingly old conservative. There's the dialogue which keeps being kicked by clumsy historical walk-ons – "I saw Kitchener yesterday" – and even that lumbering historical irony in which men in 1914 underestimate the length of the First World War. "It will be over before we get back," say Shack's explorers as they head for snow while their peers leave for the mud.

There's even, God help us, a cat which one of the lads stows away on the boat. The scene in which moggy has to be shot – a feline Captain Oates – is supposed to win tears from the audience and probably will from many but, on Channel 4, you'd expect such a scene to be played as black comedy rather than the white-out melodrama which *Shackleton* ultimately is. The drama seems another sign of how Channel 4's expedition has lost its way in the past year. It's little wonder Michael Jackson decided that the time had come to go outside.

'Square Eyes'

GOING LIVE

THE BBC's LDN news went live to reporter Jules Botfield on 3 January for the latest on the strike affecting South West Trains... but to little effect.

Studio anchor Emily Maitlis set the scene: "Jules – not much sign of a train behind you." Hardly surprising as our Jules was standing in front of a taxi rank.

Undeterred, Jules went on: "Let's get to the bottom of this" as the camera widened to reveal an "expert". "We're joined now by Tony Travers from the LSE. Tony, what's going on?" Almost at once the sage replied: "It boils down to a struggle between management and the unions about a range of issues." Never!

MEDIA NEWS

"FOR more than 20m viewers, the Trotters are the undisputed kings of Christmas TV." So crowed BBC1 controller Lorraine Heggessey, responding to news that *Only Fools and Horses* had a bumper 73 percent audience share on the big day.

It may have helped the Beeb thrash ITV in the ratings war, but was it the "quality television" the Beeb is supposed to commission? Not according to the critics: "Biggest Christmas Let-Down" (*Mirror*, 1 Jan); "far from lovely jubbly" (*Express*, 31 Dec); "Trotter Load of Rubbish (*News of the Screws*, 30 Dec); "Ready for the knacker's yard" (*Liverpool Post*, 1 Jan); and "mildly amusing" (*Grauniad*, 31 Dec) were about the best of the reviews.

Such carping matters little during a ratings war, however. And though the BBC is supposed to be above such things, the ratings battle will be even fiercer in 2002. After all, this year is a big one for the Beeb. BBC Three still needs the go-ahead, as does the transformation – already billed somewhat sycophantically as "subject to government approval" – of BBC Broadcast into BBC Broadcast Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary able to punt for work way outside the corporation. Then there is the communications bill to consider, with all sorts of opportunities for a "popular" channel to exploit.

Perhaps it is time though to celebrate the achievements of the person who really has done more than any other to ensure the BBC claimed victory over ITV in the annual ratings war for the first time in 40 years: step forward dismal David Liddiment... director of channels at, er, ITV.

Radio 2
ON AIR
JIMMY YOUNG...
NEW YEAR'S HONOURS LIST
AFTER A LIFETIME'S DEDICATION TO BROADCASTING AND THE BBC..
YOU ARE ABOUT TO RECEIVE..
THE ORDER OF THE BOOT
Dear Sir James, You're on your way out. Love King Dyke
Ken Pyne

FOLLOWING the example of politicians who smuggle out embarrassing news over the festive season, the ITV company Granada Media published its annual report on the Friday before Christmas.

It revealed that despite a plummeting share price, a staff pay freeze, redundancies galore and a £124m write-off to cover the fall in the company pension fund, outgoing chairman Gerry Robinson was given shares worth £6.3m (on top of his basic pay of £785,000) while his successor Charles Allen collected a "performance bonus" of £1.3m-worth of shares and a further £1.3m in options.

The publication date was carefully chosen. On the same day, Granada had half of Fleet Street to lunch at the Savoy for the annual What The Papers Say Awards. Company bosses hoped the hacks would be too drunk to notice the news – or, if they did, would go gently on the company which had just treated them to such an enjoyable blow-out.

And so, with only one or two exceptions, it duly came to pass.

ITV Digital, the company formerly known as ON Digital and famous for its cheeky advertising campaign featuring comedian Johnny Vegas and a woollen monkey, is often described by financial journalists as "troubled". If the experience of pensioners Mrs and Mrs Inman from Morpeth in Northumberland is anything to go by it is not difficult to see why.

Last Christmas the Inmans were given a year's pre-paid subscription to ITV Digital by their daughter and son-in-law, which was due to run until 22 December this year. Having read the small print requiring at least one month's notice of cancellation, they wrote to cancel their subscription in October. There was no response, so in November they phoned ITV Digital to reiterate the cancellation, only to be put through to the sales department.

A pushy salesman then made them an offer of 12 months' subscription at £9.99 a month plus an extra month free, but refused to put this in writing. The Inmans considered the offer, but because the company would not give them written confirmation, on 4 December they said they definitely wanted to cancel the service and arranged a date for ITV Digital to take their equipment away.

Later that day their ITV Digital service stopped working, with three weeks to go until their contract expired. A phone call to ITV Digital revealed they had been cut off because they were not resubscribing. In exasperation the Inmans contacted their local trading standards officer, who in turn got in touch with ITV Digital on 11 December. Within hours they received an apologetic call from the chief executive's office and a promise to reinstate the service immediately with an extension of their original contract to 28 December.

SATELLITE TV viewers will have found it hard to miss Sky Sport's "What's on in 2002" advert, repeated ad nauseam on the Dirty Digger's channels over the past couple of weeks. It features a young woman standing outside a TV shop, ecstatically watching trailers for the Premiership, Six Nations rugby etc.

Quite why this particular actress was chosen for the job is something of a mystery, since she has not hitherto been associated with outdoor sports. She is in fact Amanda Dawkins, an Essex girl whose supple limbs can be admired in such classics as *What's Your Fetish?*, *Ben Dover's Sex Kittens from Britain*, *Pumpin' Pussy* and *Dungeon Dykes*. Could it be that she was actually booked by Dirty Des's porn channel but turned up at the wrong studio?

8.30 **I Love Christmas.** A treat for nostalgia lovers, a reminder of the golden days of Christmas when it always snowed, the pantomime was funny and the Christmas No 1 was worth waiting for. Featuring clips from film classics such as 'The Snowman' and 'Chitty Chitty Gang Bang'.

Sutton Coldfield Observer

AD NAUSEAM

CONGRATULATIONS to fledgling agency Clemmow Hornby Inge, which recently scooped the £8m account for the *Daily Telegraph*. It's only its second account, but already a modus operandi is emerging.

The agency began life with a sole client, bagging the Carphone Warehouse business because Johnny Hornby was an old friend of Carphone Warehouse MD Charles Dunstone. Dunstone now has a place on the agency's advisory board with the company to which he gave £15m-worth of business.

The *Telegraph* account also brings old buddies back together. For a start, it's well-known that since his second fall from grace Peter Mandelson (Labour, Hartlepool), has been working for CHI as an advisor. He is also a shareholder and his media profile has done the new kids on the block no harm whatever. Mandy is another buddy of Hornby's from the days when Hornby was at TBWA managing the "new" Labour account.

SPLIT personalities

Bob Moore

Rod Stewart Hall

Hornby's brother-in-law is the author Robert Harris, another of Peter's friends. And Harris was recently hired as a columnist at the *Telegraph*, just before the advertising account was put up for pitch.

What's even more remarkable about this extraordinary stream of coincidences is that Mandelson and *Telegraph* editor Charles Moore are supposed to be at loggerheads after Mandelson accused Moore of serving up some bog-standard parliamentary answers as a front-page scoop last November: the spin doctor did not like being spun. The question is, does Moore know that the people responsible for the public face of his newspaper have as a shareholder and consultant one P. Mandelson?

Suffice to say that if this year brings some truly appalling *Telegraph* advertising – something so bad, let's say, that circulation could plummet and threaten Moore's job – we will know who's been pulling the strings.

JUST FANCY THAT!

"GMTV favourite Eamonn Holmes wants to quit the breakfast show and take over veteran DJ Sir Jimmy Young's Radio 2 slot."

— "Exclusive" by Nicola Methven, the *Mirror*, Friday 4 January 2002.

"I love the intimacy and the freedom of radio. If Jimmy Young ever hangs up his microphone, I'd like to put my application in."

— Eamonn Holmes, interviewed by Lynda Lee Potter in the *Daily Mail*, Saturday 22 December 2001.

DUMB BRITAIN

The Weakest Link, BBC1/2

Anne Robinson: Which British leading man played opposite Celia Johnson in the film *Brief Encounter*?
Contestant: James Dean.
AR: Castel Gandolfo is the summer residence of which religious leader?
Contestant: Jesus.

No Win, No Fee, BBC1

Paul Ross: Who was the next president of the USA after Richard Nixon?
Contestant: John F. Kennedy.
PR: No, it was Jimmy Carter.
(*Correct answer: Gerald Ford.*)

BBC Radio Scotland, Janice Forsyth Show

Janice Forsyth: What is the currency in India?
Contestant: Ramadan.

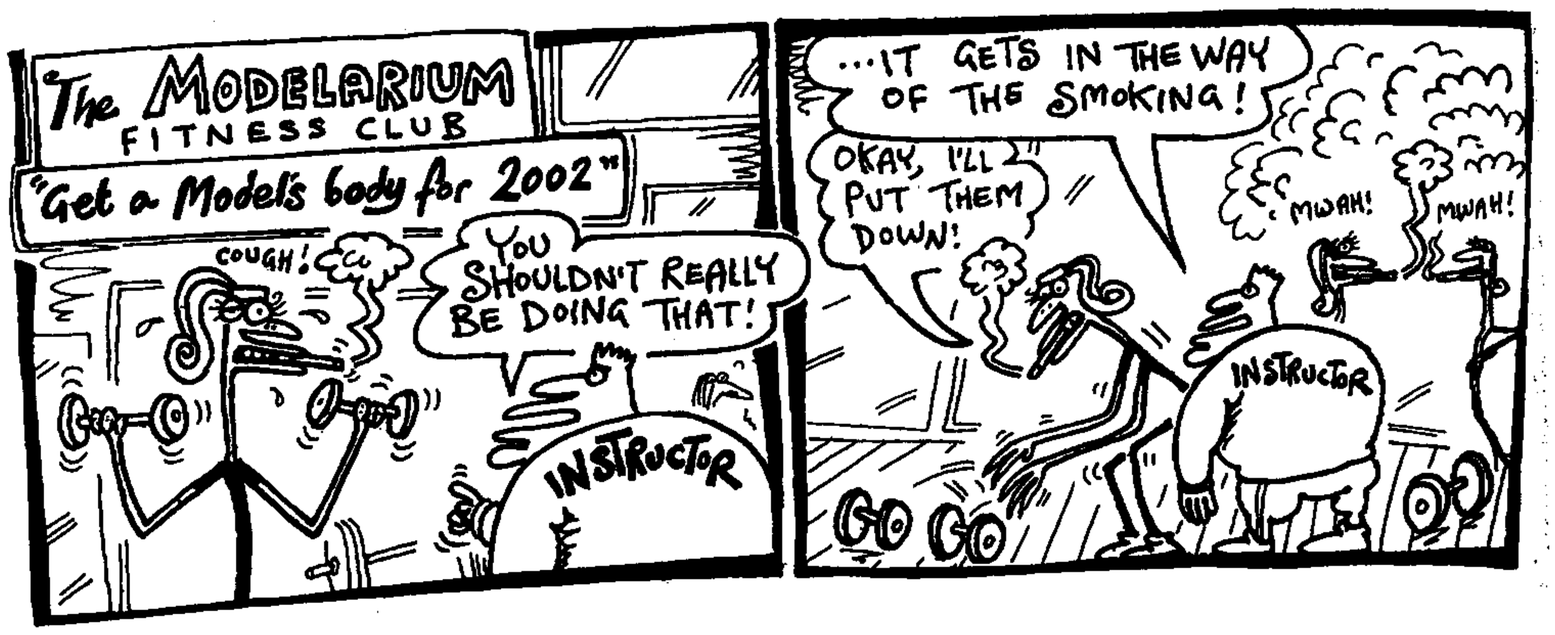
DUMB AMERICA

Win Ben Stein's Money, Comedy Central

Ben Stein: After his abdication, King Edward VIII of England became known as the Duke of where?
Contestant: Duke of Earl.

SUPERMODELS

KERBER



DOING THE ROUNDS

Anyone for measles?

PRIME minister Tony Blair's refusal to disclose details of his son's vaccination status on the grounds that it is a breech of "the total right to confidentiality of medical records" does not seem to have rubbed off on Chancellor Gordon Brown, who's sanctioned the release of all sorts of sensitive information about daughter Jennifer Jane.

Few doctors share Blair's reticence (both MD's children have had both of their MMR jabs) and indeed a recent publication called Managing Media Hype, written by a panel of "practising healthcare professionals with an understanding of the media" advocates personal disclosure as an important strategy for both convincing and alarming patients.. "Tell your patients... 'My grandmother got measles as a child and it left her deaf'." Are any of the PM's relatives hearing impaired through childhood infection? I think we should be told.

"New" Labour believes the evidence in favour of MMR doing more good than harm is so overwhelming that it shouldn't need to personalise the message. But given the disrepute of "expert" scientists following the BSE and foot and mouth fiascos, the suspicious ousting of MMR researcher Andrew Wakefield and the fact that both the government (through contracts with vaccine suppliers) and GPs (through lucrative rewards for hitting targets) have vested interests in advocating vaccination, many people may only be convinced by those in authority doing as they say.

The distrust of the MMR jab has left the number of children unprotected in some areas dangerously close to levels that could trigger an outbreak of measles. This is by far the most dangerous of the three infections and, although it would be unfair to blame the taciturn Blairs for any resulting deaths and disability, "new" Labour will certainly be liable for failing to provide single measles vaccination on the NHS. Its claim to put patients at the heart of the NHS looks laughably hollow given the uncompromising stance of the DoH to provide only the MMR jab because the "expert evidence is so strong". And yet, the same government is quite happy to pursue populist health strategies when the scientific evidence is much weaker. Hence, we still have a breast cancer screening programme in the UK despite the ultimate in scientific evidence (a Cochrane review) finding there is no reliable evidence that it reduces death rates. And the government has just announced that it will increase access to a range of largely unproven but very popular complementary therapies on the NHS (as used, or at least not denied, by Cherie Blair).

By contrast the single measles vaccine is not unproven. It's safe and it works, giving 90-95 percent protection after one jab and 99 percent after a second. This is preferable to no vaccination for patients who don't want their children to have two doses of MMR (at 12 months and 3-5 years).

Patient choice is supposed to be what "new" Labour stands for, and yet it has become impossible to get hold of privately prescribed single vaccines in some areas, even if you can afford them at £50 a shot. Denying patients this choice risks denying some children any protection at all. If the government doesn't have the ability to convince the public of the benefits of MMR, it should offer a pragmatic alternative. There hasn't been a measles death in the UK since 1990, but in 1988, before the MMR programme took off, there were 76,000 infections and 16 deaths. How many deaths this year would it take for "new" Labour to see sense?

M.D.

"I only have you along in case I need a transplant"

DOWN ON THE FARM

IT is obviously good news that the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons has decided to take no disciplinary action over the wholesale breaches of the law committed by so many vets during last year's foot-and-mouth epidemic.

This was their willingness to collaborate with the Maffia in its illegal contiguous cull policy, requiring them to condemn millions of healthy animals to death by signing illegal "form A" notices in contravention of the animal health act 1981. Just because it was government policy to commit criminal acts on an unprecedented scale, the RCVS has ruled that it would be quite improper to punish vets merely for flouting their professional code of conduct in collaborating with the Maffia.

How different was the conduct of Peter Vaughan, a Herefordshire sheep farmer who, when the epidemic began last February, was in the middle of a 24-hour a day operation with his shepherd, lambing his large flock of ewes. Each morning he was turning the new-born lambs and their mothers out to pasture, before getting to bed to snatch three or four hours' sleep before relieving his shepherd for the next stint. What made it worse was that his father had just had a heart attack and another farm worker had just gone to hospital with broken ribs.

All this meant that when, at 5pm on the evening of Friday 23 February, a complete ban was announced on animal movements, to take immediate effect, Mr Vaughan was not sitting dutifully by his radio to attend to the Maffia's every word. In fact he was visiting his father in hospital, before returning to resume work in the lambing shed. His wife Janet brought him some food and a change of clothes, and he did not get to bed until 6am on Saturday morning, before getting up to move the latest batch of 300 ewes and lambs to his other holding nearby.

The following Wednesday he was visited by a Herefordshire trading standards official, Timothy Thorn. Having received an anonymous tip-off, Mr Thorn wished to confirm that Mr Vaughan had committed a criminal act by moving those sheep on Saturday morning, more than 12 hours after the Maffia announced its ban to parliament. Mr Vaughan said he had been so busy he had only heard about the ban on Monday. But this, Mr Thorn considered, was no excuse for such blatant infringement of the law, and the council immediately put in train criminal proceedings against Mr Vaughan.

Just before Christmas, nine months later, this horrifying case of mass-criminality finally came before district judge Philip Browning in Hereford magistrates' court. He heard the council's barrister Andrew Davies claiming it was Mr Vaughan's duty to have known about the movement ban put into force on Friday evening. After all, foot-and-mouth had been making headline news. Mr Vaughan had a radio. He should have been listening in by the hour for the latest instructions from the ministry.

The judge listened politely, heard Mr Vaughan's own explanation as to why he had not been bent over his radio set that Friday, when he had one or two other matters on his mind, and ruled that Mr Vaughan should be given an absolute discharge. The prosecution's costs of £2,581 should be paid by the ratepayers of Herefordshire.

How can we expect guardians of the public good to carry out their solemn duty to enforce the law, if judges behave so irresponsibly? It is good to know that, even on the judicial bench, commonsense is not yet finally dead.

'Muckspreader'

SIGNAL FAILURES

Virgin scary

RICHARD BRANSON must be delighted that the future of Britain's busiest mainline is being settled by cosy chats between Virgin, Railtrack and the government.

The west coast line from Euston to Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Glasgow and Edinburgh carries many freight and local passenger trains as well as Virgin's "high-speed" services. But the government's commitment to increasing rail freight by 80 percent may be secondary to its commitment to helping Richard Beardie in his quest for profits.

Ever since Railtrack and Virgin put together a wildly optimistic bilateral deal in 1997 for upgrading the line, the route's other users – including Silverlink, Central Trains and First North Western – have had to fight to ensure Virgin's trains won't squeeze theirs off the line.

Most other European countries solve this problem by building new lines for their fastest trains, but treasury-governed Britain thinks it can fit everything on to Victorian tracks – an approach which is proving costlier than making new lines. Now that Railtrack's part of the upgrade has gone pear-shaped (*Eye* 1042), the route's future capacity is even scarcer than previously planned. The government now has to decide which types of train will get the limited slots available and which ones will get the elbow.

Last month most of the train operators involved were summoned to a meeting with Railtrack and government officials for all parties to discuss the line's future timetables. The meeting was cancelled, with no explanation given. Instead a different meeting was held at the same venue – involving no operators except Virgin. The freight operators have been told that for three years a huge proportion of the track will be closed every night – a key time for freight movement – to allow work on Virgin's upgrade.

Virgin's case is politically strong. This is Britain's first mainline upgrade for more than a decade and Branson's sleek tilting trains should answer "new" Labour's prayers for a "quick win" on the railways before the next election. Virgin can also threaten the government with abandoning the west coast franchise; that could make the government look rather careless so soon after Railtrack's demise. The one slight problem is that the west coast route also carries 43 percent of Britain's freight and postal trains and is used by many thousands of passengers each day for commuting and local journeys. Freight and commuter trains are central to the government's 10-year aims for growth on the railways. But as long as those other operators are sidelined from the discussions, Virgin can present a persuasive case for having more than its fair share.

PS: The last exclusive agreement between Virgin and Railtrack, shortly before the latter went into administration, was brokered by Richard Bowker, then co-chairman of Virgin Rail. Bowker is now chairman of the strategic rail authority (SRA), the organisation which will allocate capacity on the west coast line. Bowker isn't allowed to deal directly with the west coast issue for a while. So that's all right then.

PPS: Bowker's father is a high flier in bus company Stagecoach – which owns nearly half the shares in Virgin Rail.

'Dr B. Ching'

Most people on trains since 1945

The Times

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

JUST THE TICKET

IN AUGUST 1999 the *Eye* detailed an extraordinary catalogue of corruption and incompetence in Lambeth council's parking services: disabled badges available on the black market for £20… traffic wardens taking bribes not to issue tickets… parking meter money regularly going missing, etc (*Eye* 982).

An auditors' report blamed private contractor Drakes, whose incompetence was such that Lambeth's income from street parking in 1998-99 fell £7m short of the expected £12.5m, partly due to 100,000 parking tickets being unpaid.

Drakes lost the £4.5m contract with Labour-run Lambeth in April 2000, but three months later picked up a handy £2.8m-a-year deal with Tory Westminster to clamp and remove illegally parked vehicles. The standards set by Drakes in Lambeth have been maintained in Westminster, it seems, according to whistleblowers who have taken their concerns to the GMB union.

It is alleged that before releasing impounded vehicles, checks are made with Westminster's debt collectors (er, Drakes) to see if the car's owner has any other outstanding debts with the council, such as previous unpaid parking fines, and insists they be paid before release; that some foreign-registered vehicles have mysteriously vanished from the pound; and that a Drakes manager paid a hefty release fee on behalf of a driver who could not afford the charge – and kept the car for his personal use.

Westminster council tells the *Eye* the council's internal auditors are investigating allegations with the "cooperation" of Drakes management. A "cooperative" Drakes spokesman said he was "not willing to be interviewed on the phone".

● IT IS more than two years since the *Eye* first wrote about Durham city council's plan to lash out £1m on a 20-minute film history of the city as part of the millennium celebrations, the contract having gone, without being put out to tender, to Brendan Quayle, a tennis-playing chum of the Labour council's chief executive Colin Shearsmith.

Now the cinema specially built to show the film is due to open next weekend with Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*. Bookings are being taken for Quayle's long-awaited 20-minute masterpiece, *The Sacred Journey*, from 26 January. Yet Durham councillors have yet to see what they have got for their million squids.

A city council minute notes that the film was due to be delivered on 22 September 2001 and that the agreement with Quayle provided for penalty payments of £800 a day if it was not. That and a second deadline of 31 December have now passed, but the penalty clauses have not been invoked. Foot and mouth restrictions and, er, the 11 September attacks in New York have been given as excuses for the delay. Quayle now has until 20 January to come up with the goods. The excitement in Durham is unbearable.

FAMILY AFFAIR

WAKEFIELD council has been asked to investigate a flagship project that emerged from the 1984-85 miners' strike and has since received millions of pounds of taxpayers' money as part of the regeneration of the former coalfields.

The authority has been urged to probe the affairs of the Castleford community learning centre – formerly Castleford wimmin's centre – by an ousted founder of the centre.

Barbara Smith, a stalwart of "women against pit closures", helped create CWC as a lasting legacy of the year-long struggle against Thatcher and co. According to its constitution, the centre would "give all women the opportunity of working together and putting into practice those ideals for which it stands", namely providing education for working class women, a social centre and developing a cooperative spirit.

But it soon transpired that some wimmin were more equal than others – none more so than Margaret Handforth, self-styled "principal" of the centre. The social and cooperative sides of the outfit were replaced by a more "businesslike" ethos, and one by one those who challenged the management style fell by the wayside. Before long the centre was turned into a limited company with Margaret Handforth's sister installed as company secretary.

Records at Companies House suggest that Barbara Smith "resigned" as a director; but as she wrote to Wakefield council chief executive John Edwards just before Christmas: "Only one of the original committee members resigned in a formal manner, the rest including myself seem to have simply been 'replaced'."

More than a quarter of a million pounds a year of public money pours into the centre from the council, the European Union and Leeds Metropolitan University (which has bestowed an honorary degree on Ms Handforth). Barbara Smith is unhappy that one family now exerts such influence over public funds given for community benefit – "making a dynasty out of what was a public service," as she puts it. Whether the council is happy with the way its money has been spent remains to be seen.

BOY, OH BOY

LEWISHAM council leader Dave "Boy" Sullivan has fancied himself as the borough's first directly-elected mayor ever since the government published its proposals for local government reform in 1999. In October (*Eye* 1042) his ambition received a boost of sorts when the people of Lewisham voted by a 3 percent margin in favour of the mayoral option in a paltry referendum turnout of 18 percent.

Nevertheless, with the hard part out of the way all that remained for Sullivan to do to fulfil his dream was to win the vote of Labour's rank and file and be adopted as the party's candidate. Alas, in the December ballot Sullivan lost to former council leader Steve Bullock by 429 votes to 371. He has now cried "foul" and complained to the Greater London Labour party that the ballot was irregular, with some individuals receiving as many as half a dozen ballot papers, ballot papers being sent to dead members, etc, etc.

It does not seem to have occurred to him that another reason he may have lost the election is his record, with which local Labour party members are very familiar. Highlights of Sullivan's career to date (*see Eyes* 894 & 908), which perhaps did not help his campaign, include:

1990: Sullivan sets up a management training company called Dave Sullivan Development Services Ltd. The company borrows £20,000 from Lewisham Enterprise Finance Ltd (LEF). At the same time LEF receives £275,000 from Lewisham council.

1991: The company receives further loans totalling £18,000 from LEF despite its failure to stick to the repayment agreement for the previous £20,000.

1995: Sullivan is forced to resign as chair of Lewisham's personnel committee. This follows the setting up of Serviceteam Ltd, a company which emasculates Lewisham's in-house service provider DIRECTeam by poaching nearly its entire workforce.

1996: LEF goes belly-up after auditors reveal a complete lack of financial control. Chief executive Barry Quirk admits that, had Lewisham's code of conduct for members been in operation in 1990, he would have advised against LEF granting loans to Sullivan.

1997: Sullivan resigns as a director of Serviceteam. However, another firm, Onsite Recruitment Ltd, of which Sullivan is a director, provides Serviceteam with staff.

2000: Sullivan resigns from Lewisham's contracts sub committee. The resignation is prompted by his wish to ensure "clarity about his interests". Meanwhile, Sullivan becomes the first recipient of the £32,000 salary paid to Lewisham's new "full-time" leader.

BRUSSELS SPROUTS

WHEN Wolf ("The Grabber") Grabendorff left the Institute for European-Latin American Relations (IRELA), a think tank he had run for years in Madrid on funds provided by European Union taxpayers, he left no forwarding address.

That was understandable, though a shame, since IRELA was in some chaos: salaries were unpaid and a nasty audit report about a missing 4.4 million euros (around £2.7m) was in the air (see Eye 1043). OLAF, the European commission's fraudbusters, are now on the case and will report shortly.

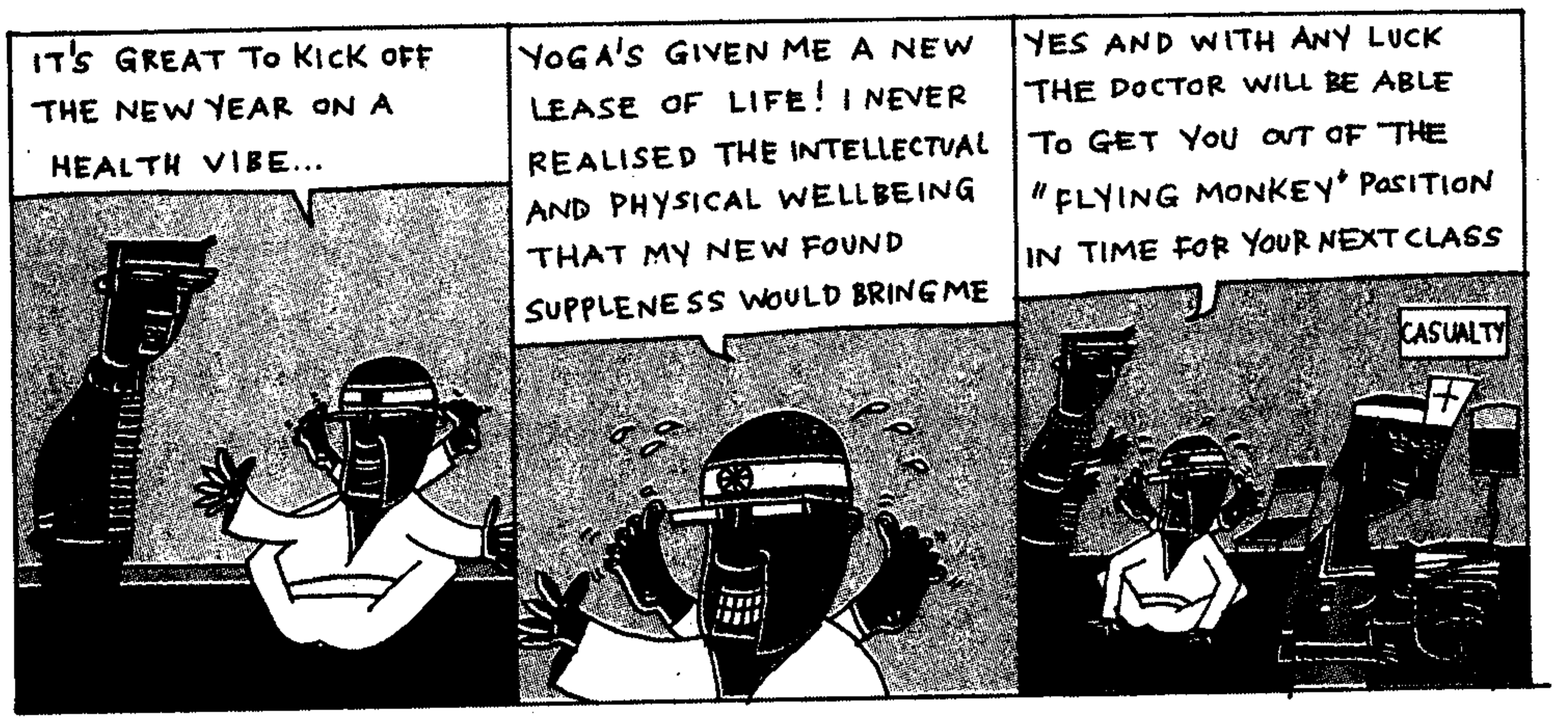
Meanwhile the Grabber has been tracked down to Berlin where he has been running the Latin American programme at the oxymoronic "Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik" (SWP), or Foundation for Wisdom and Politics, headed by one Dr Christoph Bertram. This is a think tank financed, most EU taxpayers (except, of course the Germans) will be glad to hear, mainly by German government funds.

Sadly the SWP has itself now run into trouble with the commission. EU commissioner Chris Patten had to abort prematurely the Conflict Prevention Network (CPN), a scheme run by the SWP with commission funds, because the end product, its reports, Brussels said, were not up to the right intellectual standard. Some had been tossed off by junior staff. The SWP has even had to pay money back to the commission.

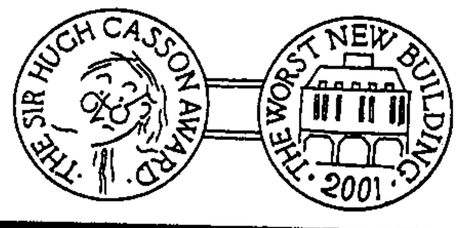
Now the SWP is lamely trying to hit back. The CPN project director Reinhardt Rommel – oops, sorry, Rummel – is claiming publicly from the German capital that Patten's cohorts behaved in a "sometimes untimely and non-transparent manner". It would be entirely wrong to suggest that the Grabber's IRELA money troubles with the commission during his time in Madrid have anything to do with SWP's money troubles with the commission during the Grabber's time in Berlin.

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON

KNIFE & PACKER


IT'S GREAT TO KICK OFF THE NEW YEAR ON A HEALTH VIBE...
YOGA'S GIVEN ME A NEW LEASE OF LIFE! I NEVER REALISED THE INTELLECTUAL AND PHYSICAL WELLBEING THAT MY NEW FOUND SUPPLENESS WOULD BRING ME
YES AND WITH ANY LUCK THE DOCTOR WILL BE ABLE TO GET YOU OUT OF THE "FLYING MONKEY" POSITION IN TIME FOR YOUR NEXT CLASS
CASUALTY

NOOKS and CORNERS



THE time has come to survey the past year and award the ever-so prestigious Sir Hugh Casson Medal for 2001. Thank goodness it is over: it was a bad year for architecture as for everything else.

It was a year in which – despite the dreadful fate of the World Trade Center – an insidious campaign was waged against English Heritage for – sometimes – opposing the construction of yet more very tall buildings in London and elsewhere. With self-interested poseurs – I mean Lord Rogers of Riverside, of course – having the ear of Tony's government, the deep seated hatred of planning restrictions and listed building legislation which lies in the heart of every modern architect may well achieve fruition in legislation designed to emasculate the statutory guardian of historic buildings. Beware: the position of old buildings in Britain has not been so precarious for decades.

With its obsession with image and spin, this government cares nothing for the historic environment. It is content to maintain a penal taxation system which actively discourages the maintenance and repair of listed buildings – or any buildings, for that matter – by the iniquitous imposition of 17.5 percent VAT when new build as well as the alteration or mutilation of historic buildings is zero-rated.

In its report, *Power of Place*, English Heritage echoed the widespread call for VAT on building work to be 5 percent across the board: new build or repair, listed or unlisted. But the response from the department of culture, media and sport, *The Historic Environment: A Force for our Future*, simply avoids the issue and fails to recommend this one single most constructive and *economic* policy to conserve and sustain the built environment. Victory for the treasury, yet again.

There are just a few reasons for optimism, however. For years I have banged on and on about the unhealthy degree of power wielded and work seized by that brace of beknighted and ennobled High Tec architects, My Lords Foster and Rogers. For years they have built up their empires by a mixture of charm and menace, persuading our normally visually-indifferent establishment that they are geniuses worth knowing. No criticism disturbs their sleep as the press is kept in its place by the threat of withholding cooperation and by the knowledge of libel lawyers commanding large fees. But now, perhaps, the tide is beginning to turn and architectural journalists are waking up to the fact that they should be critics rather than public-relations lackeys.

An editorial in the Christmas number of the *Architects' Journal* entitled "Is it time for Lord Foster to face the future?" actually begins "It isn't Lord Foster's finest hour" and proceeds to criticise both a massive, banal proposed addition to Selfridge's and the huge, overweening commercial development which threatens to ruin what is left of Spitalfields: "an outsized impostor whose sloping end elevations hint at nothing so much as the existence of an indoor ski slope." Quite.

But what of the Casson Medal? Nothing this year worthy of it by the design machines to which Richard and Norman add lustre and success with their names – besides, they have won it too often already. Nor, after the flurry of gratuitous and ill-thought-out millennium schemes, was there any big public project opening last year ridiculous enough to merit it. But there is one building funded by the millennium commission which deserves the gong, not because it is intrinsically bad but because of the destructive, uncivilised thinking it represents: the so-called Forum in Norwich.

Norwich City Library, a good building of 1960, was destroyed by fire in 1994. Much was lost, including the superb Norfolk local history collection. At first Norwich city council proposed to replace it, not with a new library containing old-fashioned things like books, but by "Technopolis", an exciting new complex dedicated to the future of computers and videos. Fortunately that project was ridiculed to death and eventually a new library was planned on the site of the old, next to Norwich's superb 1930s City Hall. It has been designed by Michael Hopkins & Partners, cost some £63.5m and opened late last year.

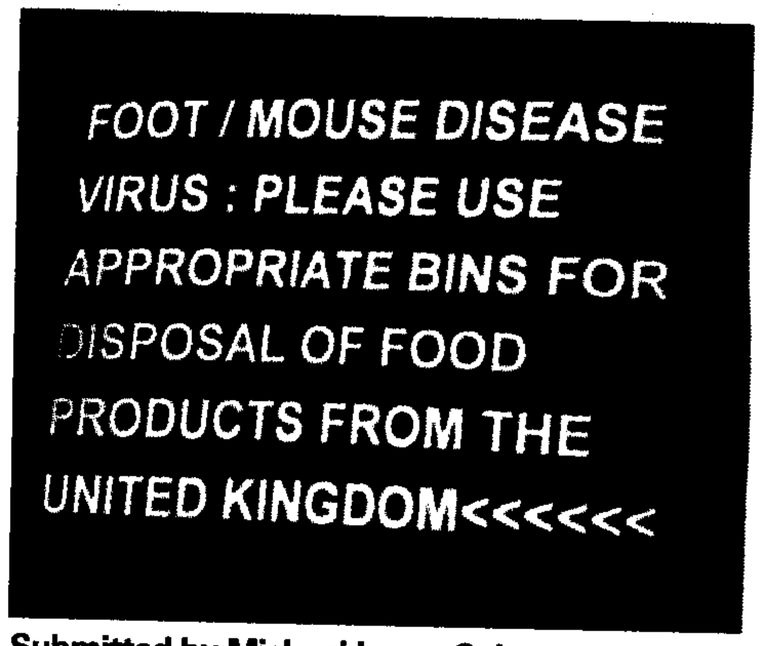
So far so good, except that it is not just a library. In plan the building is U-shaped, with one of those unbroken repetitive, not to say boring, perimeter walls beloved by Sir Michael Hopkins: in this case made of red brick. The open front of the "U" faces the glorious Perpendicular church of St Peter Mancroft. The Forum, indeed, seems all entrance, with a huge recessed glass wall under the overall arched metal roof flanked by canted glazed wings. The wing on the left, enjoying the view over the market place, has been let to the BBC; that on the right proudly proclaims *PIZZA EXPRESS*. Yes, there is a library – a generous one, with a local history collection – around the curve of the "U" at the back of the huge atrium behind the glass wall, but its presence and function has scarcely governed the form of this huge and crude building.

The Forum – aka the Norfolk and Norwich Millennium Library – celebrates two banal ideas with which modern architects are obsessed. One is having walls of glass where masonry and controlled fenestration would work rather better; the other is a vapid concern with "space" at the expense of form and mass. Every office building, every shopping development, has to have an "atrium" and the Forum seems almost all atrium. But what is it for? A forum means a public meeting place for open discussion, but this space is just a giant lobby for commercial office space – and the library. Perhaps it can be used for concerts (while the library is open?), except that Norwich is over-endowed with such public spaces in its many redundant churches. Besides, there are no seats: if you want to sit down you have to go and pay in Pizza Express – which occupies the desirable gallery across the entrance.

In other words, the Forum is closed commercial space with a library tagged on to save the council money, or – to use a joke already made – an ace pizzeria with a library attached. Such is the state of the concept of the educational public building, such is "public space", at the beginning of the 21st century in the reign of "new" Labour. Oh dear. And Happy New Year.

'Piloti'

I-SPY *Zurich Airport*



Submitted by Michael Lacey-Solymar. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

Warballs

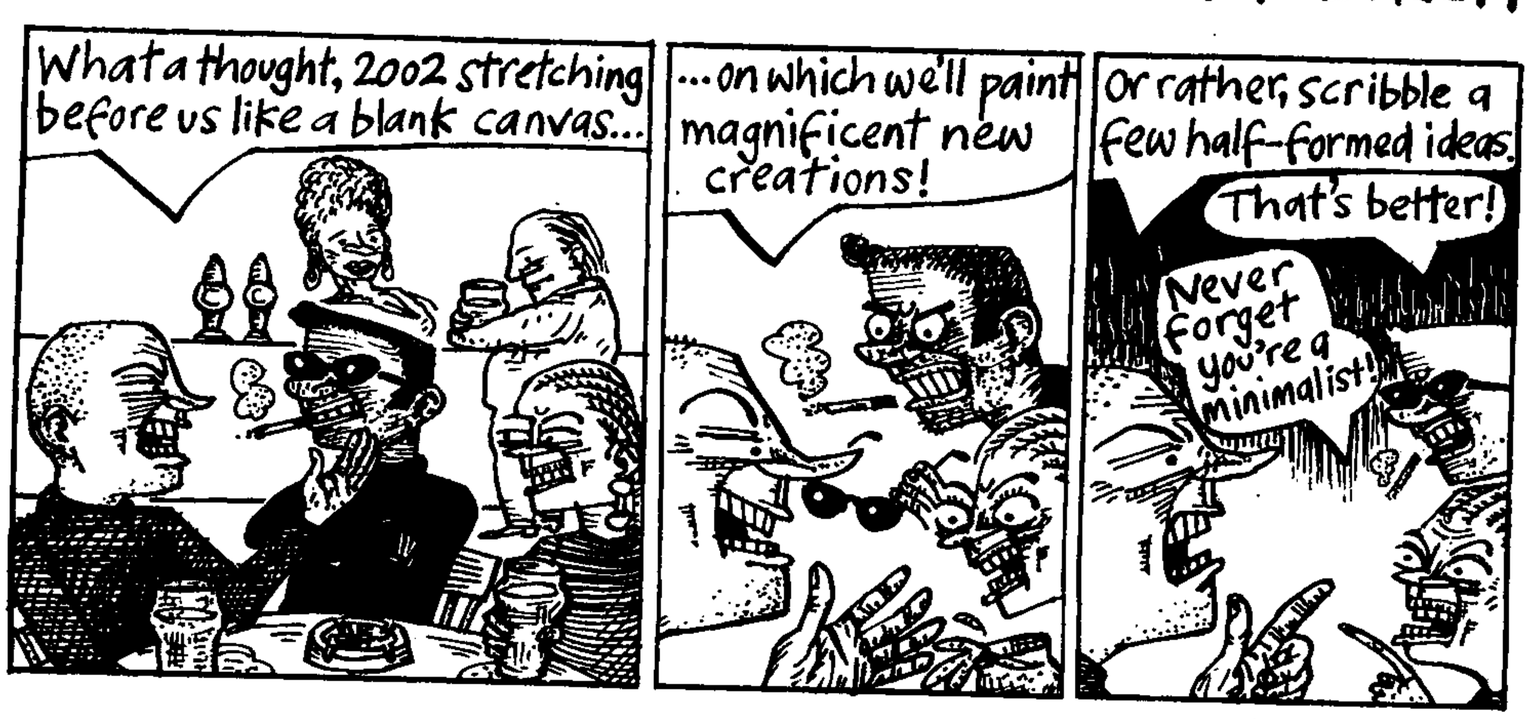
"Moulton believes that 'with the collapse of the Taliban, there is a genuine feeling the worst may be over and it is now time to get on with our lives. We have now seen what many viewed as a necessary correction in house prices, taking us back to levels seen 12 months ago. 2002 will see a stable property market with no dynamic price rises or falls.'" — *London Property News*.

"One of the more reassuring pictures post 11 September was of Victoria Beckham at a fashion show in Milan. Her face glowed with a yearning to spend money. I felt that only she stood between us and recession." — Sarah Sands, *Vogue*.

"Like the *Elle* team, you must still be recovering from the shock. It has undoubtedly changed your life, maybe just in some small way — a cancelled party, a postponed wedding, ruined holiday plans — not that any of that really matters. Not when you consider, or even try to understand, the scale of human tragedy in America and the awful anxiety now felt by the rest of the world. At times like these, as editor of a fashion magazine, you wonder what on earth you can do to help. Sure, we cancelled the Style Awards party as a mark of respect… But what else?" — Fiona McIntosh, *Elle*.

"**From My Heart to Yours.** The twin towers attack on 11 September 2001 changed so many lives… The good news is that many of our perspectives have changed as well… As we prepare for 2002, we see great things on the horizon. The winter NAMM show in Anaheim will bring exciting new products for us to present to you. I am hearing about some products that will blow your mind." — New Year's message from Marc Ottestad, president, ProSound and Stage Lighting.

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS BY BIRCH


What a thought, 2002 stretching before us like a blank canvas...
...on which we'll paint magnificent new creations!
Or rather, scribble a few half-formed ideas.
That's better!
Never forget you're a minimalist!

Letters

Stern rebukes

Sir,

If correctly reported, Peter Mandelson's claim that in 1935 his grandfather Herbert Morrison carried weapons to the Stern Gang is even more puzzling than HP Sauce (Eye 1044) suggests.

Stern formed his organisation in September 1940. By then Morrison had joined the Churchill coalition government that was resolved to defeat Nazism, and Stern had written to Hitler proposing an alliance against Britain. In such a context, the smuggling of weapons would seem improbable.

Yours faithfully,
DAVID MARTIN,

Sheffield.

Sir,

Not that it matters, but the King David Hotel was blown up by the Irgun Zvai Leumi (IZL), not the Stern Gang. Perhaps it's more interesting to note that the leaders of IZL (Menachim Begin) and Stern (Itzshak Shamir) both went on to become prime ministers of Israel.

ROGER PIERCE,

Via email.

Lookalike

Bridegroom

Harry

Sir,

I wonder if by chance anyone has noticed the extraordinary similarity between J.K. Rowling's blushing bridegroom and her fictional offspring Harry Potter. Is it magic?

ENA P. WUGGINS,

Worcester College, Oxford.

Little local trouble

Sir,

I refer to your report on my council in the Rotten Boroughs column (1044).

Far from being "peeved" by the report from our internal auditors (which we commissioned), we were pleased to discover the real cost of implementing the government's "Best Value" regime. The real tragedy is not that we have spent some £400,000 of staff resources to save £100,000, but that all other councils (especially small district councils like us) are experiencing the same problem with this bureaucratic process.

The government has at least recognised that the burden of best value in its present format outweighs the benefits and we await the promised review of the regime.

The staff incidentally would have been doing their "day jobs" rather than best value and many staff were actually undertaking the best value role in their own time in the evenings and at weekends.

It is a characteristic of local government at the district level that we implement central government initiatives faithfully and dutifully. Perhaps if we were to fail publicly like the Passport Agency, Child Support Agency, Railtrack, Defence Procurement, et al, we would receive more recognition and perhaps even more funding?

Yours faithfully,
TIM HOWES,

Chief Executive, West Somerset District Council.

Arts and crafty

Sir,

I notice your correspondent, the eponymous Dick Witts (1044), fails to mention that he is a former member of the Arts Council's staff. He also fails to mention some key facts (nothing new for the Arts Council):

1. In two rounds of consultation arts organisations have submitted 533 written responses to the proposals. Of these 350 were completely or mostly negative about the proposals and 124 completely or mostly positive (the latter figure includes responses from numerous theatre companies which, a week before the publication of ACE's ridiculous "A Prospectus for Change" had received letters from ACE telling them of large increases in their grant-aid). Among individuals (mainly individual artists) across the two rounds of consultation, negative written responses (354) outweighed positive responses (55) by more than six to one.

2. Between March and September there were about 20 consultative meetings about the proposals attended by members of the Arts Council's Executive Team. At most of these the majority of those present have either been openly hostile to, or seriously sceptical about, the idea of a "single organisation".

Given, 1) none of the senior management at the Arts Council has ever run an arts organisation, 2) its original proposals (March 2001) which were intended to be implemented within three weeks have still not been costed and 3) the fact that no arts organisations and artists can see the benefits, why not just scrap ACE and let the 10 RABs do the job everyone wants them to?

DUNCAN FRASER,
(a non-guzzling adviser and former RAA Assistant Director),

Via email.

Harrison blew whistle

Sir,

With regard to your correspondent Stan Broadwell and the umbrage he took following the remarks of Don McLean on the sad death of George Harrison. I'm afraid he (Mr Broadwell) is talking out of his arse. Harrison did indeed regret producing the film ("The Life of Brian") and stressed this in several interviews during the media outcry after the film was released. All this talk of Handmade Films saving the British cinema industry is complete twaddle.

Yours,
IAIN OAKWOOD
(Editor of "The Quiet One – The George Harrison Newsletter"),

Hull.

The brio of Brillo

Sir,

Re: Media News (1042) "Brillo Pad" and "Dispatch Box".

Whilst I'm not one who normally runs to the defence of Andrew Neill I can't help but take exception to your article which refers to viewers of that political programme as "MPs and insomniacs". I am not an MP, nor do I have trouble sleeping and, as one of that diminishing breed of people under 30 who is still interested in politics, I find "Despatch Box" is now one of the few programmes on terrestrial television where one can find out what sick little things are going on inside the heads of our "right honourable" leaders. Now, whilst Brillo has his downsides, he has recently been remarkably good on this rare type of programme and seems (your esteemed organ's esteemed inside knowledge apart) almost close to objective – the debate on the future of Gibraltar being a recent example.

The afternoon parliamentary programme on BBC2 is next to useless as the journalists often leave asked questions unanswered and it ends up as a spun mouthpiece for the various parties of power. More to the point, it's on when we should be at work.

"Dispatch Box", like "Question Time", is on far too late in the evening to get the viewing figures it deserves which, like a lot of television programmes nowadays, is a problem not necessarily because the programme is rubbish (common enough) but because, as a columnist in the TV trade mag Broadcast once put it, "Charlie the scheduling chimp" seems to be arranging our viewing.

Anyway, as an under-30 could I ask if you have any photos of a mature journalist bringing politics to the young? (Yes. Acting Ed.)

Best regards,
JOHN FISHER,

Crimson Sky (Video Production), London SE20.

Poison pen

Sir,

It made me sick to read (1044) that you printed the letter from Jonathan King. That the Eye is big in the nick may be OK, but to print that supercilious letter is quite disgusting. I am ashamed of you. You make me sick, sick, sick.

ANNABEL GEDDES,

London WC2.

PS: Otherwise, darlings, you do make me laugh. Bless you.

For the Record

Sir,

The "Record of the Year 2001" was the fourth such annual ITV show. Therefore it cannot be ITV1's "latest attempt to play in the hole left by The Premiership" and your review was wrong to suggest it was commissioned as a consequence of the success of "Popstars" and "Pop Idols".

The only basis for your claim that the "Record of the Year" is "a covetous copy of the BBC's `Top of the Pops' format" is that it features hit records performed in a studio. In fact, the format of the "Record of the Year", with the winner decided by the public and their votes counted region by region, owes more to the Eurovision Song Contest (which also attracts huge ratings without fail).

Your review said that the "Record of the Year" "seemed well designed to persuade viewers to go somewhere else". If so, it failed for the fourth year running – it has achieved ratings between 7.8 and 10 million each year, eclipsing all other music shows including "Top of the Pops" and the "Top of the Pops Awards" (which launched this year and to which some of your criticisms might apply).

Yours,
JOE TAYLOR (Editor The Tip Sheet, co-producers of The Record of the Year),

London NW1.

Elementary, dear Watson

Sir,

Please note that Watson and Crick were not responsible for "the discovery of DNA" (Street of Shame, 1043). However, they did work out its three-dimensional structure. DNA was discovered in the nineteenth century.

Pendantically [sic] yours,
KIERAN BALHETCHET,

Via email.

Accent on quality

Sir,

Having read Couch Potato (1042), he should try watching "Emmerdale Farm" where you can count the number of Yorkshire accents on one hand. Is this what the viewers actually want to hear, bearing in mind that a Yorkshireman's accent locates him to a 10-mile radius and how Yorkshire folk view strangers? (I do not watch any of the three programmes as soaps are definitely for the working classes.)

GEOFF WRIGHT,

Doncaster.

Muir the merrier

Sir,

Re: John Muir Birthplace. Sadly it seems the inhabitants of the Street of Shame have fallen on hard times Piloti can obviously not afford the cost of a telephone call from Glasgow to Edinburgh. If he, and other hacks from The Scotsman and The Herald over the last few months, had bothered to lift up the phone to cover the other side of the story of the John Muir project, they would have discovered that they had been the subject of a gigantic deception.

Far from "the authentic interior of John Muir's house being destroyed", the project that I and my colleagues are proposing for the John Muir birthplace is to remove from the building everything that had been placed there ***in 1978****; no more, no less. In that year the building was completely gutted, all floors, walls and other internal fittings were removed and what is seen today is a totally modern piece of make believe (an independent report by respected conservation architects Nicholas Groves Raine has confirmed this recent history). The venerable Mr Muir, who was born in the house and lived there to the ripe old age of two, would not recognize anything that we see today. Our project is designed to preserve the authentic remains of the house, being the four exterior walls and the roof, and then to place an interpretive museum with disabled access within those authentic remains.*

Not only have the hacks been had, but also thousands of well-meaning members of the Sierra Club have been subject to this astonishing misinformation campaign from Graeme White's overactive computer and would be horrified to learn that they had lent their name to a campaign to preserve a Disney-style piece of make believe history. I believe Piloti to be also a well-known Glasgow academic; let's hope he actually does some ***research*** *in his day job.*

Yours sincerely,
RICHARD MURPHY,

Edinburgh.

Dumb and dumber

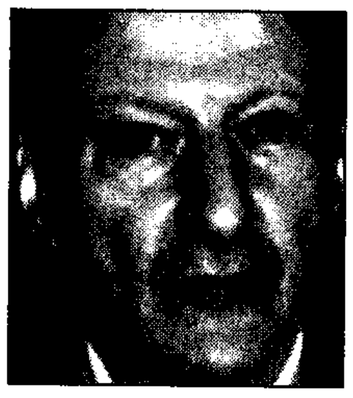
Sir,

Although I enjoy your Dumb Britain series, I do wish you would include the correct answers so I know what I am laughing at.

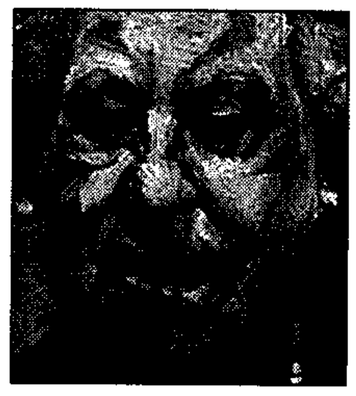
Yours,
KEVIN STEVENS,

York.

Lookalike



Queen



Freud

Sir,

Is Lucien Freud's so-called portrait of Her Majesty in fact a tacit way of telling us of his sideline as a drag artist? I think we should be told.

Yours etc,
S. SHARPLES,

Cornwall.

More needle over MMR

Sir,

James Pickett (1043) cites the data from Prof John O'Leary in support of Dr Wakefield. This data has been presented at scientific meetings, but not yet as an article in a peer-reviewed scientific journal. Until this happens it is not possible to judge whether the correct techniques have been used properly and therefore whether these data are valid.

We do not believe that Dr Wakefield's position at the Royal Free Hospital became untenable because his work cast doubt on accepted wisdom. Dr Wakefield drew conclusions that are not supported by the evidence and this he continued to do in spite of accumulating evidence that he was mistaken.

We imagine this precipitated his resignation. Institutions should support useful scientific research, even if the conclusions are uncomfortable. They have no duty to support what the Eye itself in 1998 called "Bad Science".

David Thrower (1043) is correct. We have read the article by Prof Spitzer and colleagues. Their study resembles that carried out by the Medicines Control Agency in that they only looked at children who had adverse effects attributed by parents to MR or MMR vaccine. The MCA/CSM in their conclusion quite rightly said: "It was impossible to prove or refute the suggested associations between MMR vaccine and autism or inflammatory bowel disease because of the nature of the information, the self-selection of cases and the lack of comparators. Nevertheless the working party found that the information available did not support the suggested causal associations or give cause for concern about the safety of MMR or MR vaccines."

Prof Spitzer and colleagues examined the case notes of a similar group of children and, likewise, could not possibly draw any conclusions about the cause of the children's autism for the same reasons as have been noted in the recently published report by the MRC. It is puzzling that Prof Spitzer should imply that such conclusions can be drawn. On the other hand, David Thrower will be aware that after it was suggested that the 12 children in Dr Wakefield's study were not typical, Dr Farrington and colleagues performed an extended study that was designed to look at a possible link between autism allowing for a delay in diagnosis of autism of up to five years after MMR was given. They found no link between children being given MMR and developing autism. We therefore stand by our conclusion that there is no evidence linking MMR with autism and a lot of evidence to the contrary.

DAVID ELLIMAN,
Consultant in Community Child Health,

St George's Hospital,

HELEN BEDFORD,
Lecturer in the Epidemiology of Child Health

Institute of Child Health.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"Michael Schumacher – the finest driver ever to sit behind a Formula One car..."
BBC World News
(Paul McDermott)

"Cometh the hour, cometh the moment..."
RAY STUBBS, BBC1
(Matthew Bain)

"... the longer this [indecision] goes on, the more the fig leaf of the economic tests is beginning to be exposed as rather hollow."
CHARLES KENNEDY, Guardian
(Jon Paul)

Terry Venables: *... either it's a penalty or it's not.*
Des Lynam: *And sometimes it's neither.*
The Premiership, ITV
(Graham Bell)

Lack of vision

Sir,

It's a shame that Square Eyes (1044) couldn't have made a point about Christmas Day TV being rubbish without giving us so much misdirected sneering.

The most unpleasant example of this was a reference to people who have been identified in research as wanting to use their TV at Christmas for games and DVDs. These people are dismissed in the article by using a standard device: their putative names are Darren and Doreen, ie they are not middle class and therefore stupid.

I would love to have been offered some great TV on Christmas Day and would be interested to know why I wasn't.

Good premise, bad writing, Square Eyes.

Yours faithfully,
TERRY McDONNELL,

Via email.

Sabra rattling

Sir,

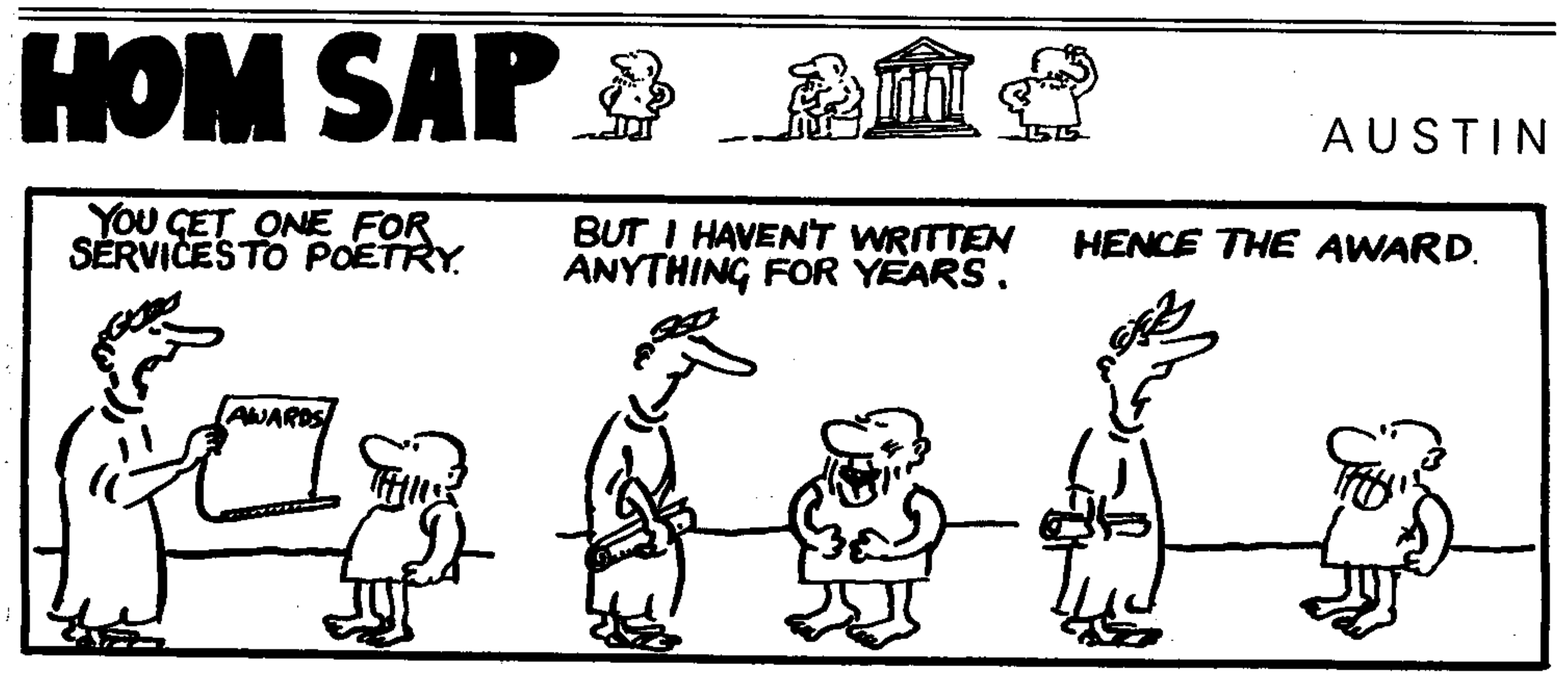
I am grateful to Mr de Fries (Letters, 1043). Originally I though the "Letter from Israel" was an honest appraisal of the situation but, thanks to Mr de Fries, I now see it was a "hate-filled, fanatical diatribe".

His suggestion of an article from Mr Sharon to redress the bias was very good. I for one would love to hear Ariel's reminiscences of the heady early 80s, and his visits to Sabra and Shatilla, and I wish him luck in cleansing the West Bank and Gaza Strip in a similar fashion.

Personally I blame Arafat. I would suggest targeted assassination but, since he is above school-leaving age, I fear he is too old for the Israeli military to deal with.

Yours,
RICHARD CAREY,

Chessington, Surrey.



Letter from **South Africa**
from Our Own Correspondent

ONE enduring legacy Britain bequeathed us ex-colonials, apart from snobbery and endemic racism, is the love of a good anniversary. So in the last week of 2001 one trotted down to the horse-track in Cape Town, along with the British consul-general, for the 141st "Queen's Plate." Every year, come apartheid or sunshine, Brenda graciously coughs up for a silver plate to be presented to the winning owner, who also pockets R312,500 (roughly £18,352).

The winning groom gets a cash gift, too. Race organizers are so proud of this multi-racial munificence, they actually boast of the groom's bonanza in the programme. The victorious groom, a blackamoor, gets R200 (roughly £11).

Brenda's photo is on the programme cover; taken, it seems, at her coronation. But who says we "new" S'th Efrican whites are stuck in a time-warp? April marks the 350th anniversary of the founding of a tiny European settlement here. Caucasian Capetonians would like a jolly good knees-up to celebrate the establishment of civilization on the tip of this dark continent.

Unfortunately some of our darker-hued compatriots have already begun bellyaching about slavery, land theft, carnage of the indigenous peoples and have pointed out, quite unnecessarily, that our "founding father" Jan van Riebeeck hated this posting and was only sent here after being found guilty of corruption in the East Indies.

Anyway, for folk still proud of empire there is a far more significant date for which preparations are already underway. This is the centenary, in 2004, of little Rhodes University, our most determinedly "British" academy which still likes to boast it is "Oxbridge" in pedigree.

This outpost of imperial dreaming spires in the poverty-stricken Eastern Cape was launched with a generous bequest from the estate of the great Cecil Rhodes, in size and style the Robert Maxwell *de son jour*. Such is the anticipation at this bastion of higher learning that the university communications department recently asked the library if it could dig up some examples of the old rogue's contribution to "the struggle".

Frankly we former colonials take a pride that there is nothing you can do in the ol' "Mother Country" that we can't do with knobs on. Take Higher Principals. During the years of apartheid, Rhodes fought a decent(ish) battle for academic freedom. But now that we have a black majority government, its mediocre clique of white administrators have shown their true colours by persecuting a troublesome scholar. This has led to outraged (but fruitless) protests from academics around the world.

Dr Robert Shell, a historian with an international reputation, was running a small unit conducting cutting-edge research into the statistics and spread of HIV/Aids, South Africa's greatest crisis. Alas, Dr Shell also made waves, including claims that at one Rhodes campus, while making redundancies (including some of the university's few black academics), white administrators were appointing their own relatives and friends. Clearly he had to go. At his summary trial, despite a presumption of innocence, the "prosecution" inadvertently referred to Dr Shell as "Dr Guilty." Shell was sacked, his vital unit swiftly closed.

Last year the university caused another uproar by firing a black woman cleaner, a diabetic never previously in trouble, for "stealing" jam. Rhodes also offered a reward of R500 for poor black employees to inform on each other.

You will understand why we are so proud, post-BOSS and apartheid tyranny, to be keeping the liberal flame of truth and justice burning bright in our new democracy.

There is much, therefore, to celebrate from our colonial heritage. The ideals of freedom, fairness, equality (the qualities which, in 2004, we will doubtless hear the deceitful and bigoted Cecil Rhodes heroically championed) are safe in the hands of our white liberal elite.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

o "Insects can do many things that people can't," Assistant Professor Isao Shimoyama told a press conference in Tokyo, "such as being able to lift hundreds of times their own weight. The placement of the electrodes is still a very inexact science, but within a few years we'll have electronically-controlled insects carrying colour mini-cams with surroundsound stereo microphones, and equipped with hi-tech backpacks. The potential applications of this work for mankind could be immense."

Professor Shimoyama was explaining why the Japanese government had just awarded a $5,000,000 grant to his bio-robot research team at Tokyo University. "We envisage insects crawling through earthquake rubble searching for victims, or being slipped under doors on espionage surveillance, in suspect restaurants for example. At present, we're experimenting with the American cockroach, Perplanta americana. We remove the wings and antennae, then equip them with tiny microprocessors, and fit pulse-emitting electrodes where the antennae used to be. That way, researchers can control them remotely by sending signals to the backpacks, making them turn left or right, scamper forward, or spring backward. The technology isn't so difficult. The real problem is understanding what's happening in the nervous system."

Raphael Holzer, a Swiss researcher on the team, added: "we breed them by the hundreds in plastic bins, and they are not nice insects. They stink, and there's something nasty about the way they move their eyes and antennae. But they look nicer when you put a little circuit on their backs, and remove their wings." *(Associated Press, 23/9/01. Spotter: Paul Merry)*

— o —

o *"Everybody stretches the truth a little in their campaign slogans," admitted a city official in St John's, Newfoundland, "but Dorothy's has turned out to be a downright lie. Her slogan was 'Vote for Wyatt, She Won't Be Quiet,' but that can't possibly be true now. She'll be very quiet indeed. She's dead."*

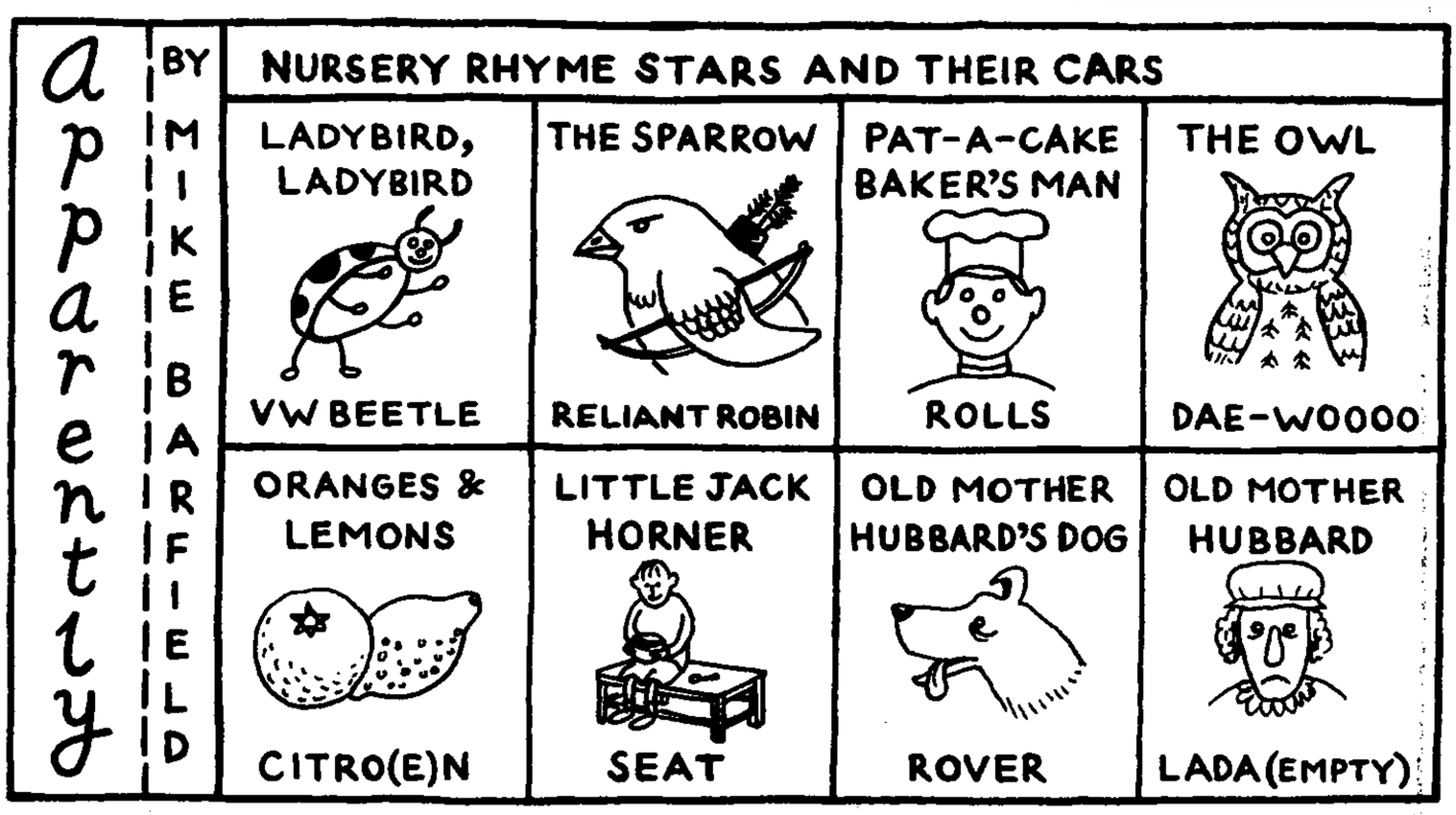
The official was speaking after seventy-year-old Dorothy Wyatt was re-elected as a city councillor, despite having died several days before the election. "The problem lies with the mail-in ballot system we use here. It allows people to vote up to a month before the official polling day, and almost everybody uses it. Dorothy was a popular councillor, and she secured 6,050 votes, even though she'd been dead for a week by the time we counted them. And on polling day itself, another thousand people voted for her, even though we'd put signs up in all the polling stations, announcing her death. We'll miss her at council meetings, especially the miniskirts and the boob tubes." (Canada Press, 25/9/01. Spotter: James Spence)

— o —

o "As a pet psychic, I am able to communicate with animals on a level far deeper than simply running the can opener or jingling a leash. My gift enables me to hear what dogs, cats, and horses are saying, and to talk back to them. My successful clients have included a dog that suffered anxiety when separated from its owner, and another dog who in a past life was Hitler, and slept all the time to escape depression from the trauma. I have also helped a three-legged cat who was feeling guilty because it left its 'treasures' in its owner's boots rather than

the litter box, and I also counselled a dog that was trapped inside a cat's body. He had some issues, but I cured him.

Initial consultations are $50 a session. I can communicate with dogs, cats, and horses, even if they are dead, but I do not work with birds or fish. Carol Schultz, pet psychic." *(Advertisement in The Dallas Morning News, 3/6/01. Spotter: Ed Browne)*



ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Hullo,

And a very happy New Year to you all from India where, as some of you may know, I am on a very important mission to bring about a dialogue between the Hindu and Muslim communities.

Two great religions – but, as we all know from watching our televisions, too often they just can't seem to rub along together in a civilised way.

And yet I can already hear our friend from Tesco saying "What can *you* do about it, Vicar? It's been like that for centuries."

Well, let me remind our friend from Tesco, and everyone else who may be reading this newsletter, that they said exactly the same when I set out on my mission to bring peace to Ireland.

There too we saw two religions, two groups of people who'd hated each other for generations.

And yet now, since I explained to them the true message of 'Good Friday', the miracle has come about.

Little children can now go to school in complete safety, guarded by British soldiers!

And isn't the same thing true in Afghanistan? There too the children of Kabul can go to school under the watchful eye of our British peacekeepers (at least those kids who have managed to survive the bombing!).

And I expect I hear some of you saying, "Yes indeed, Vicar, and what about the wonderful contribution you made in bringing peace to war-torn Kosovo?"

Well, all I can say to those parishioners is, "Thank you for reminding me of that memorable achievement as well."

Look, I'm not one to blow my own trumpet, as you well know! In fact, we've had so many successes since I took over the parish in 1997 that even I sometimes forget just what a fantastic job I've done (with your encouragement, of course!).

It may seem a little bit premature to pat ourselves on the back for what I'm hoping to achieve in India!

But if our past record is anything to go by, I could understand why some of you might be thinking of putting my name forward for the next Nobel Peace Prize!

In fact, Mr Campbell tells me he's already launched a new website where parishioners can add their names to the petition which he is planning to send to the committee in Sweden which decides these things!

Let me hasten to stress that this is in no way my doing! But should you wish to add your name to all the thousands Mr Campbell has already "logged in", then please feel free to check out www.blairnobel-stalbion.co.uk!

Yours,

Tony

Parish Postbag

Dear Sir,

As a senior member of the congregation who has seen many incumbents of the vicarage come and go, may I say that I have never known anyone so puffed up and full of himself as

Yours sincerely
BARBARA CASTLE,
The Old Seatbelt,
Harold Wilson House.

The Editor reserves the right to cut all letters just as they are about to become interesting. A.C.

Women's Group

The Vicar's wife continued her series of talks with a most interesting account of the trip she and her husband had recently made to Egypt during the post-Christmas period.

Egyptians, she explained, were largely Muslims and it was part of her and her husband's present agenda to forge closer links with the Muslim community. During their visit she had met only friendship and a keen interest in her handbag, which had gone missing during a guided tour of the Sphinx.

She then showed slides of the pyramids and explained that these ancient structures were historic healing zones. Anyone, she added, could construct a pyramid at home and use it for self-help.

During questions, Mrs Short asked how a pyramid would help to cure poverty and homelessness in the Third World. Mrs Blair regretted she had no time to answer questions, owing to a prior engagement at the rectory.

Parish Giving

An Important Announcement

Many of you have written into the vicarage in recent days asking if it is alright to put euros in the collection plate. The answer is obviously 'Yes'. If we are to play a fully active part in the modern world, it is vital that we should move with the times. So whatever you may have heard from some members of the PCC (Mr Straw will know who I am talking about!), remember that, as far as I am concerned, pounds or euros are equally welcome (whatever our treasurer Mr Brown may tell you!). T.B.

THE BLESSING OF THE VINDALOO

The Vicar joins in a traditional religious ceremony during his recent visit to India.

CAR PARK

Mr Birt writes: A year ago the Vicar asked me to make a long-term appraisal of the car parking facilities outside the church during services.

My preliminary findings, following months of on-the-spot market research, suggest the following:

- There are too many cars.
- There aren't enough spaces.

There are a variety of possible solutions, which I have outlined in a 476-page working paper entitled "Towards A Solution To The Car Park Problem At St Albion's".

In brief, I suggest the following:

The setting-up of an independent 10-man task force, headed by myself, to look into the whole car parking issue and propose possible solutions (these could well involve removing the car park entirely to a more suitable location, or alternatively rebuilding the church adjacent to an already-existing car park). J.B.

Religious Affairs

RACE IS ON FOR C of E TOP JOB

by Our Religious Staff
Archie Bishop

SCENES of frantic manoeuvring followed last week's announcement that Archbishop George Carey is to step down from the Church of England's number one hot seat.

As the news broke, the prelates scrambled to throw their mitres in the ring and become the most powerful man in Christendom apart from the Pope and everyone else.

WHO CAREYS?

Who are they, the would-be primates who hope to step into Carey's holy shoes?

Who Do You Want To Lead The Church You Never Go To?

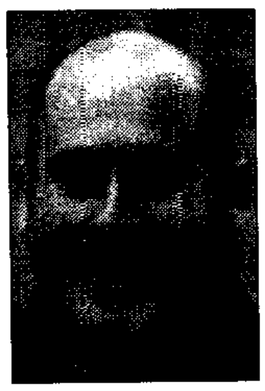
Ring our 24-hour Canterbury Hotline and play your part in the year's most important canonical decision.

- 1. Michael Owen
- 2. A.N. Wilson
- 3. Frank Bruno
- 4. Kirsty Wark
- 5. Mullah Omar
- 6. Rabbi Blue

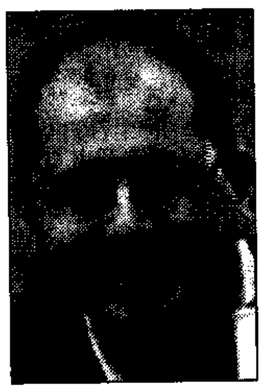
(That's enough names. Ed.)

Bishop Maurice Glasses, Bishop of Lymeswold, the C of E's "safe pair of hands" who sees the job as "a tremendous challenge".

Bishop Winston Blackman, Bishop of Brixton, described as "a steadying influence".



Bishop Gary Straight, Bishop of Haywards Heath, middle-of-the-road contender with conventional tastes. Favours "evolution rather than revolution".



Bishop Beardie of London – the people's favourite, but controversially believes in God, so unlikely to make the shortlist.

BLAIR PEACE MISSION LATEST

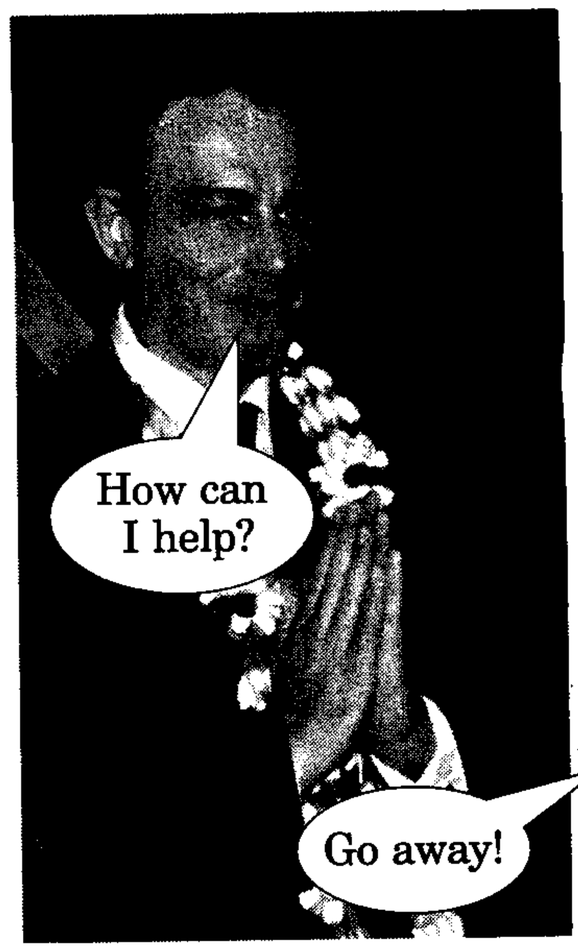
by Our Man In Bangalore **Edwina Curry**

THERE were hopes of peace here yesterday after Indian and Pakistani leaders shook hands and signed an agreement that Mr Blair was "an interfering trouble-maker with delusions of grandeur" who had brought their two countries to the brink of war.

Said a spokesman, "Everything Blair said, we disagreed with. Everywhere he and his wife went, they enraged us."

SMARMY MANOEUVRES

The spokesman continued: "We are united in our common condemnation of this dangerous man and his dreadful wife. If they come again we will drop a nuclear bomb on them." *(Reuters)*



Coming In The Eye

THE UNKNOWN ELIZABETH

TO mark the 50th Anniversary of her reign, Private Eye will be serialising a sensational new biography of Her Majesty which goes behind the scenes to reveal the Queen as she has never been seen before, as a small, dwarflike figure with an artificial leg and a ginger beard. *(Is this right? Ed.)*

Top Royal biographer Graham Turnoutanotherlotofoldrubbish-aboutheRoyals has interviewed well over 26,103 people, each one of whom has given him a unique insight into the daily life of the world's most famous woman.

Did you know...

★ The Queen has a secret love of horse racing and likes to go to race meetings.

★ *For years the Queen has kept a number of small dogs (mostly corgis) which she takes for walks behind closed doors.*

★ The Queen has a number of houses, including a Scottish hideaway called Balmoral where she goes in the summer.

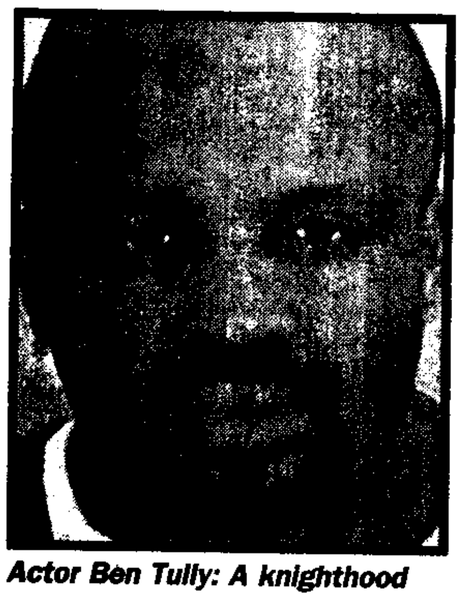
Serialisation of this sensational new book 'The Unknown Elizabeth' begins in the next issue of Private Eye. Order your copy now.

The successful applicant must possess a peasants telephone manner, good keyboard skills, time management skills and a sense of humour.

Kiwi Maps advertisement, NZ

In December join us for Mulled Wine and a Micepie - FREE!

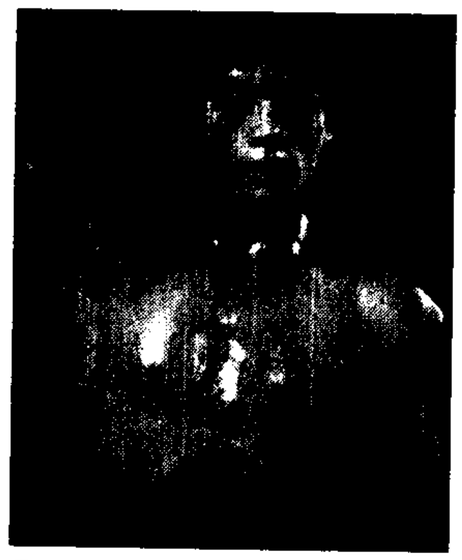
Faringdon Farmers' Market



Actor Ben Tully: A knighthood

Novelist Rosalind Moss: She becomes Dame Rosalind

'70s pop singers Rick, Dave and Paul Yoghurt ("The Yoggles"): MBEs



Boxer Ramprakash Watson: BEM

NEW YEAR HONOURS

(cont'd. from p.1)

for services to the Inland Revenue in Stirlingshire

R.S.J.(Overseas)

A.B.F. Kenwright, services to aerobics, Pitcairn Island; **P.B.L. Barkworth**, services to road maintenance, Gibraltar; **Mrs V.R.Q. Stubbins**, services to the hot drinks industry, Falkland Islands.

M.M.R. (Royal Household)

Sir K.K. Trembling, Lord Keeper of the Bees; **Lady Cynthia Wheen**, Mistress of the Rhubarb; **R.P.J. Gaytrouser**, Cleaner of H.M. The Queen Mother's Mobile Telecommunications Device.

K.F.C.

Mrs N.C. Cuddleigh, services to road safety outside Birtwhistle Nursery School, Halesowen; **Banjir F. Singh**, services to late night retailing, Hexham; **Rev. Pauline Bucket** services to services, Caerphilly; **Asif bin Laden** (no relation) services to community relations *(That's enough honours, Ed.)*

"Me too... my wife still thinks I'm working down the pits"

DUNCAN SMITH RESIGNS FROM TORY PARTY SHOCK

by Our Political Staff PETER O'BORE

IN THE most astonishing move he has made since becoming leader of the Tory Party, Iain Duncan Smith today announced that he can no longer belong to a party which is foolish enough to have him as his leader.

"We live in a modern age," he coughed, "and it is no longer acceptable for a modern political party to have someone like myself at its head.

"What kind of message does it give, particularly to younger voters," he gasped, "to see a bald-headed nonentity parading himself as leader of the opposition."

Grassroots Tories were last night jubilant at their new leader's principled initiative.

"It shows," said Daily Telegraph editor Charles Moore, "that Iain is every bit as inclusive and forward-looking as Michael Portillo. I can think of no better way for Iain to ensure a Conservative victory at the next election than for him to resign."

CARLTON CLUB

"Mr Duncan Smith's blow for common sense gives the lie to all those who have portrayed him as some kind of right-wing extremist.

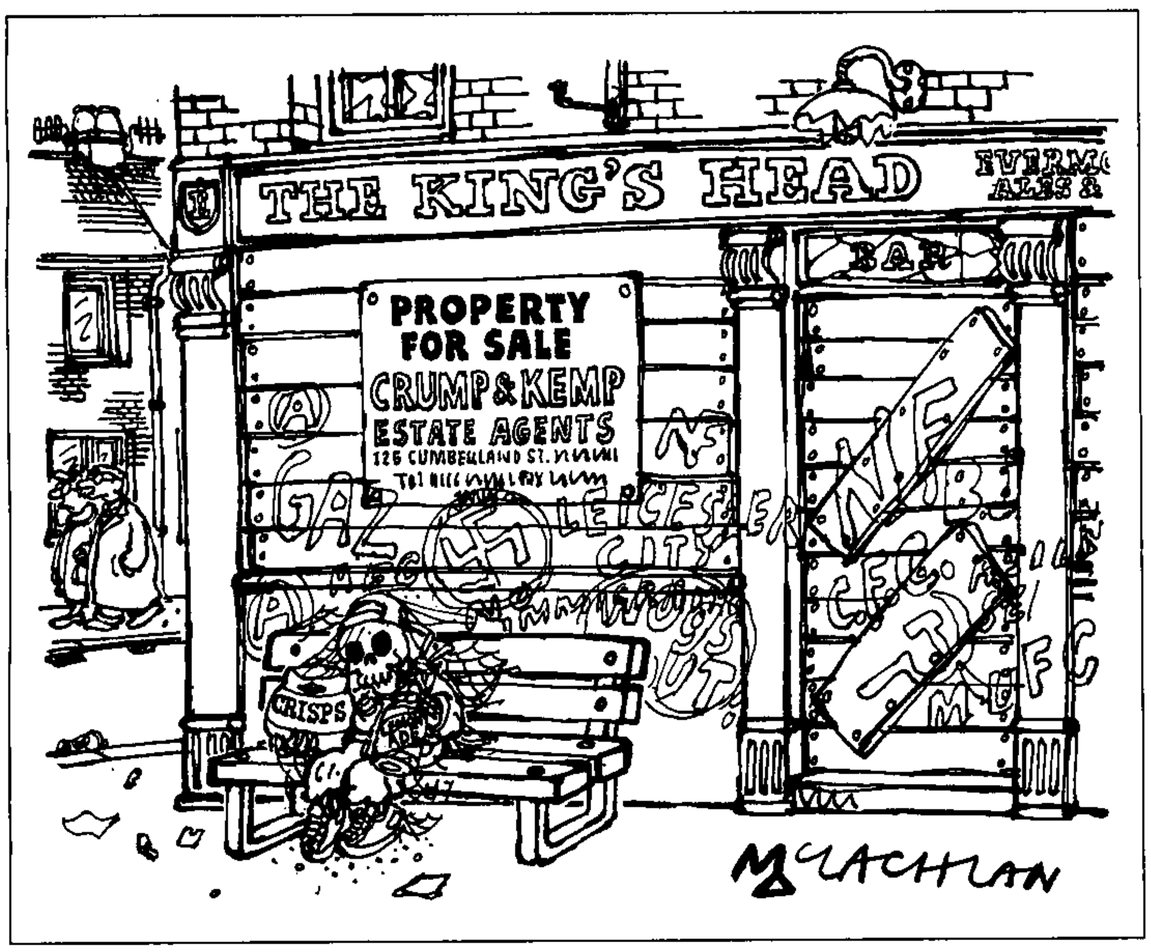
"His decision to resign on principle shows him up as simply mad, and the British have always respected insanity in their political leaders – viz. Mrs Thatcher and Sir Edward Heath."

Pigs' Parts
GRUNT!
MY MOST SUCCESSFUL HEART TRANSPLANT YET! LOOK AT THE WAY HE LOVES EATING HOSPITAL FOOD!
ONCE UPON A TIME THERE WILL BE THOUSANDS OF CLONED LITTLE PIGS!!
HE'S TELLING THE KID A BEDTIME STORY
I THINK THE PIG WOULD HAVE BEEN HAPPY TO HAVE ENDED UP IN A SHIT
THUD! THUD!
YOU HAVE A VISITOR
MAMA?
NOBODY SAID THERE WOULDN'T BE SOME SIDE EFFECTS
I'M FINE, DOCTOR! I'D JUST LIKE SOME MORE STRAW!

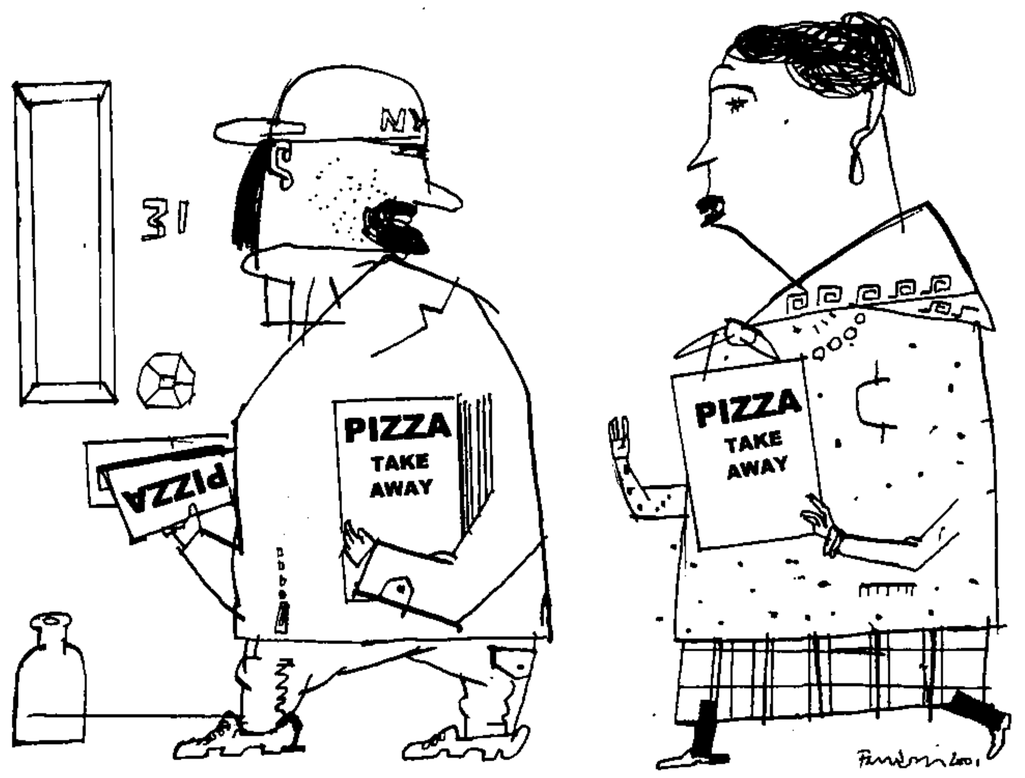
GRAND DISGUSTING CHRISTMAS QUIZ RESULT

Thanks to *Eye* readers for a bumper crop of filth, smut and innuendo. There were countless submissions of "I wouldn't Adam and Eve It", myriad plays on the word "Cox" and not a few mentions of "Tits".

Notable runners-up include: the wolf saying "I'm not a wolf – I'm a friend" (**Frank Petherbridge**), "Now perhaps people will believe we have a normal sex life" (**John Marsh**) and the wolf saying "Garnish them how you like, I'm not eating that lot" (**Simon Bucher-Jones**). But the winning entry, printed above, is from **IAN TAYLOR**, who receives an envelope stuffed with £50.



Scenes You Seldom See



"Have you got some more leaflets I can give to my friends?"

WHERE ARE BIN LADEN STORIES HIDING?

By Our Afghanistan Reporter **Mullah Rice**

AS THEY returned from their Christmas break, all of Britain's newspaper readers were wondering today where all the stories about Osama bin Laden's whereabouts had disappeared to.

"For the last three months we could be almost certain that they'd be somewhere on the front page," said one bemused reader, "but now they seem to have become hidden behind a vast network of comments pieces about New Year's resolutions and articles about soap stars and the Royal family.

"It's amazing that they could have disappeared seemingly overnight with no one noticing."

A Sex Attack Doctor Writes

AS a Sex Attack Doctor, I am often asked, "Sex Attack Doctor, are you dead?" The simple answer is "No". What happens is that the Sex Attack Doctor, prior to prosecution, realises he's going to go down big-time. He therefore fakes an illness and has a mortuary attendant write out a death certificate, or *Bogus Mortuas Certificandis*, as it's technically known. The Doctor then recovers completely and drives around Ireland without a care in the world.

If you're a Sex Attack Doctor and you think you might be dead, see a patient and ask for a second arousal... I mean opinion.

Tuesday, January 1, 2002

Daily Mail

COMMENT

AS WE enter into the year 1971 *(Surely 2002? Ed.)*, we feel it is our duty and our responsibility to give a stark warning about the nightmare that awaits Britain as a result of the changeover to decimal currency *(Surely the euro? Ed.)*

We predict that this unnecessary and unpopular changeover will lead inevitably to a meltdown on the markets, unprecedented chaos on the streets of Britain as our shops and clubs are flooded with an unwelcome and unfamiliar new currency, resulting in the end of Western civilisation as we know it. *(That's more like it. Ed.)*

So we urge all our readers to join with us in the fight to keep the tanner, the two shilling and the two bob bit. *(You're fired. Ed.)*

THE HAS-BEANO
WITH ALL YOUR LEAST FAVOURITE CARTOON CHARACTERS
NUM SKULLS
TOTAL SILENCE FROM YOU MR. DUNCAN SMITH
NIL FROM MOUTH
SPIN DOCTOR'S ORDERS!
BUT YOU CAN'T EXPECT AN ACTIVE BRAIN TO STAY QUIET AND SHUT DOWN
LUCKILY IT'S NOT AN ISSUE!
BRAIN DEPT.
I CAN'T SEE ANY PROSPECTS!
EYE DEPT.
I CAN'T HEAR ANY GOOD NEWS
EMBARRASSED COUGH!
IMPORTANT THINGS TO SAY
BORIS THE MENACE
TEE HEE! I'VE HAD MY POCKET MONEY CONVERTED TO EUROS! - NOW FOR SOME TROUBLE-MAKING FUN!
I'D LIKE TO BUY SOME TUCK PLEASE!
WATCH THIS MONETARY MAYHEM READERS!
YAR-EURO!
YOUR EUROS ARE MOST ACCEPTABLE MASTER BORIS!
UNLIKE YOU!

WAR OVER — OFFICIAL!

By Our Ratings War Correspondent **Osama Bin Watchinthetelly**

THERE WERE scenes of rejoicing in Shepherds Bush last night as the long-running war against the hated extremists of ITV came to an end. The war that pundits predicted would last forever ended abruptly when John Simpson led his cameraman, sound-recordist and three lighting engineers onto the moral high ground. ITV capitulated by broadcasting 'The Great Escape' for the 497th time on Christmas Day.

They Think It's Mullah Omar – It Is Now!

Said a victorious leader of the British Broadcasting Corps, "We are delighted. For too long the people of Britain have been afraid to turn on their television sets for fear of becoming slaves to 'Who Wants To Be A Mullahionnaire', with Chris Taliban. Now, thanks to our saturation bombardment of the schedules, they are free to enjoy quality rubbish, such as 'Casualty', 'Holby City' and 'Eastenders' four times a week."

Pap Idol

BBC leaders knew that the war was over when the traditional Christmas Day football match in 'No-man's Land' (hosted by Des Lynam) was removed from the schedules, and they quickly moved in their heavy artillery in the shape of David Jason (played by Del Boy Micawber) in 'Only Fools And People Too Pissed To Turn Over'.

Repeats of the highlights of The Ratings War can be seen on UK Gold every Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday at 7am, 1.30pm and 11.45pm.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

From Mohammed Massingberd III

Sir, As is customary at this time, I am sending you a list of the most popular names in 2001 compiled from your Births column.

BOYS	GIRLS
1 Osama (-)	1 Posh (1)
2 Harry Potter (8)	2 Countess of Wessex (9)
3 Becks (3)	3 Naomi (4)
4 Duncan Smith (-)	4 Petronella (6)
5 Starbucks (9)	5 Cherie (-)
6 Euripides (-)	6 Mrs Whitehouse (-)
7 Dubya (-)	7 Tarara (2)
8 Dyson (7)	8 Ribella (6)
9 Ali G (-)	9 Ribena (7)
10 Frasier (6)	10 Nigella (3)

Yours sincerely
MOHAMMED MASSINGBERD III
Ealing

★ *Your Private Eye cut out 'n' keep souvenir of the most historic moment in Europe's history* ★

NEW ERA DAWNS AS MILLIONS QUEUE FOR EUROS

by Our Entire Staff

MAKE NO MISTAKE. January 1 2002 will go down in history as the day when the world changed for ever.

It was the day the foaming Europhobes said would never happen.

Yet all over Europe, from Bruges to Berlin, from Kilkenny to Kathmandu, the story was the same.

Millions of ordinary herrs and fraus, señors and señoras, hommes and dames proved the dismal jimmies wrong as they queued for hours to get their hands on the currency that spells unity for ever on this once war-torn continent.

Fuehrer What A Scorcher

I spoke yesterday morning to a typical Belgian housewife, Mrs Ludmilla Maigret, 67, who was living proof that the launch of the euro has been a total, 100 percent triumph.

"Oh yes," she admitted, her eyes shining, as she proudly showed me the new coins in her purse.

"They told us that if we wanted to go to the supermarket we would have to use them. It's all beyond me."

Meanwhile, ten thousand miles away above the Arctic Circle, the Finnish inhabitants of the tiny Lapland settlement of Tapioca were busy celebrating the most exciting event which has ever happened in their country in their time-honoured fashion, by gulping down litres of their favourite local tipple, a fiery spirit distilled from pine cones and reindeer dung.

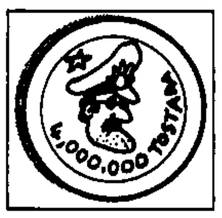
The only inhabitant of the town sober enough to give me a quote, 81-year-old Aarro Kentainan, told me, "This is a great day for us all. I now feel we are all one great big family, bound together by the fact that we have no idea what is going on."

C'est La Même Change

But as Europe danced and sang far into the night, there was universal criticism for the country that refused to join the party.

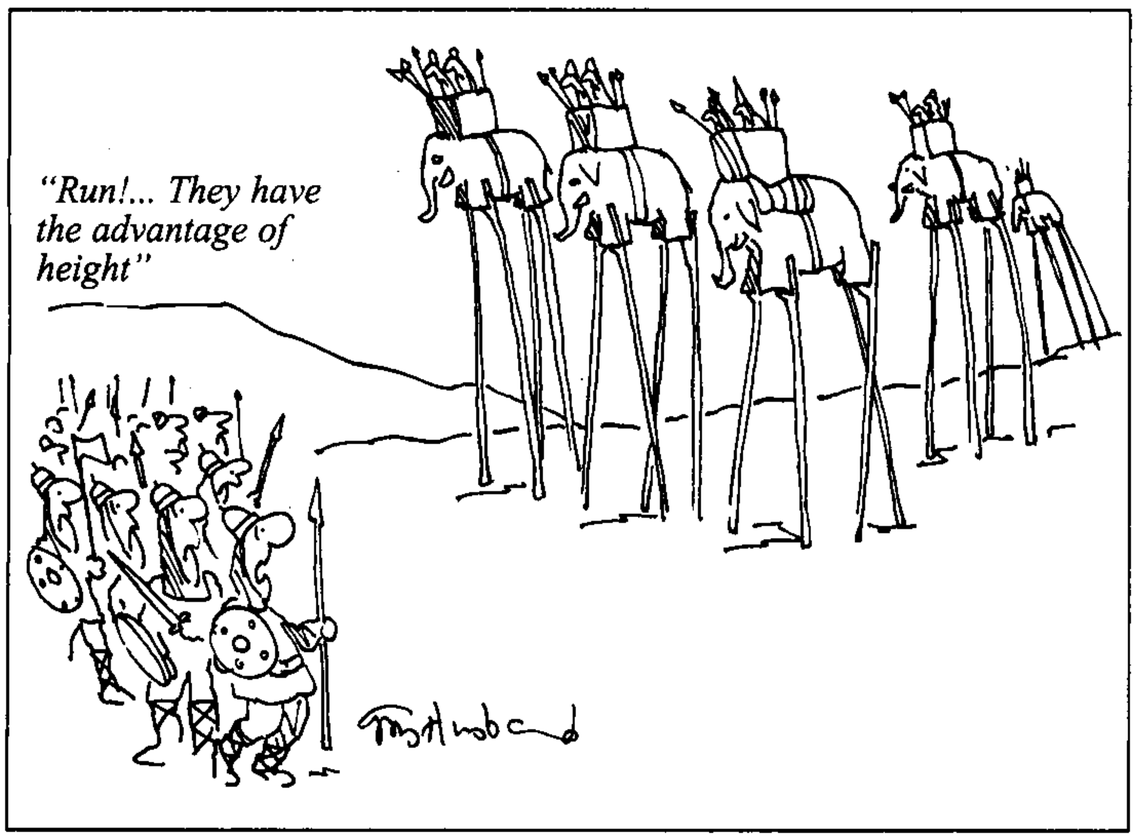
"It's always the same with you English," said Breton baguette salesman Gerard Depardieu. "You sit around on the sidelines, wondering whether to join in, just like you did in 1940."

THE CURRENCIES WE SHALL NEVER SEE AGAIN
No. 94 The Tostado



THE TOSTADO is one of Europe's oldest currencies. It was introduced in 1238 by Moorish invaders, under Caliph Abdul the Wicked. It was abolished in 1326 when the throne was reclaimed by the Christian Emperor Don Alfonso XXIII, but revived again in 1936 by the Fascist dictator General Portillo Bastardar. Following the revolution, the Tostado went through several devaluations, so that today there are 4 million tostados to the pound.

Tomorrow: The Gromek



Fashion News by Our Style Staff **May Kova**

It's Sexy! It's Fun! It's the Euro!

THERE'S been nothing like it since Mary Quant invented the mini-skirt way back in the swinging sixties.

Suddenly, all over Europe, there's only one fashion accessory which counts – one that says "You're Numero Uno" in the fast-moving world of where it's at. The message is – bin your mobile and chuck away last year's baseball hat.

The only thing that says "I'm 2002" and tells the world that you're a switched-on sex freak is that shiny new little coin a-jinglin' and a-janglin' in your pocket or your purse.

© W. Rees-Mogg 2002

Millions log on to the whacky world of 1901

by Our Internet Staff Sidney and Beatrice Website

THE world wide web was on the point of meltdown yesterday as billions of surfers logged on to the most popular internet site ever – Britain's 1901 census forms.

These were just some of the astonishing shock revelations which yesterday became public property for the first time:

● **QUEEN VICTORIA** was still alive, listed as a "self-employed empress" living at Buckingham Palace, 1a The Mall, London SW1.

● **W.G. GRACE**, the famous cricketer, appears as "Dr William Gilbert Grace, general practitioner, The Willows, Ealing Common, London W5".

● **THE MARQUESS OF SALISBURY**, describing himself as "The Prime Minister", gives no fewer than 79 separate addresses, including "10 Downing Street", "Hatfield House" and 77 public houses.

Among the many surprises in this incredible picture of a bygone Britain, we find, living at "136b Stalegrass Crescent, Liverpool", Adolf Schickelgruber, later better known as Adolf Hitler, ruler of the Third Reich.

Name and surname of each person	ROAD, STREET and NO. or NAME of HOUSE	Age last birthday
Deedes, William Frederick	c/o Morning Post Fleet Street, EC4	25

A typical 1901 census entry shows details of legendary Telegraph journalist Bill Deedes

Notes & Queries

QUESTION: Can anyone explain why so many places in the country are called "Parkway" – eg, Didcot Parkway, Tiverton Parkway, etc?

☐ THE name "Parkway" derives from the old Norse word "Parkvauga", originally meaning "a clearing in the forest", where travellers could leave their wagons while they engaged in marauding expeditions to the city of Londinium.

Question: Who invented the pizza?

☐ THE first-ever recorded pizza was served, surprisingly, in London in 1762, by an Italian immigrant Giovanni Battista Pizza. Even more surprisingly, it bore little resemblance to the pizza we know today, consisting as it did of two pieces of bread enclosing a slice of ham or cheese.

Question: Why can we see through glass?

☐ GLASS is made from a compound of silicates, hydrogen chloride and mono-sodium glutamate. When these are heated to a temperature of 800 degrees celsius, the dense particulate matter is dissolved, leaving only a thin, brittle film, which is transparent.

Answers, please, to the following: a) Is it true that ping-pong was invented by Cistercian monks in the 12th century? b) Can fish drown? c) Is Peter Jay still alive?

" We are all ears to your requirements or needs and are committed to ensuring your total satisfaction. In the unlikely event of this happening, please let us know" *Chateaux de Charme*

As the British Foreign Secretary, Jack Frost, has said: "Where we allow societies to disintegrate or states to fail, we put at risk the basis of global society itself." *Sydney Morning Herald*

EXCLUSIVE TO ALL NEWSPAPERS

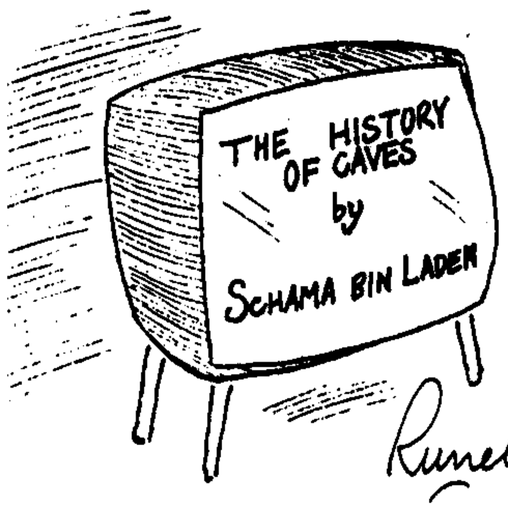
17 YEAR OLD BOY PASSES DRIVING TEST

INSIDE

Pictures of the boy sitting in a car. **2-17**

Articles about what this boy driving will mean to us all. **18-17**

Pakistan and india slide towards nuclear war. **94**



POETRY CORNER

Lines on the 100th anniversary of Marmite

So.
Marmite.
Congratulations.

You are
100.

Famous spread
On toast.
Enjoyed by
Millions.

But what
Is it made of?

Perhaps we
Shall never
Know.

E.J. Thribb (17½)

ME AND MY SPOON

THIS WEEK

LORD JENKINS OF HILLHEAD

No one could say you were born with a silver spoon in your mouth, could they?

Fwom a stwictly histowical point of view, I would have to agwee with you. But I like to think that, in a vewy weal sense, the silver spoon has always been an integwal part of the way I like to live my life.

As one of our most distinguished historians, do you think that spoons can shed light on the great figures of the past?

Vewy much so. I wemember once when I was spending a weekend at Blenheim Palace with the Mawlboroughs, actually using a spoon which had been given to the first Duke by the Elector of Saxony in wecognition of his gweat victowy over the Fwench at Wamillies.

Could you get to the point please, we haven't got much space?

All I would add, since you pwess me on the point, is that an expewience such as that I was twying to descwibe bwings the past to life in a vewy, vewy vivid way.

Could your present role as Chancellor of Oxford University, you probably see some quite historic spoons being brought out at dinners and so forth.

As Chancellor, one is expected to gwace all sorts of functions, some of which, I have to say, can become a twifle weawisome. I have to be perfectly fwank, and say that I have never weally considered what pwecise wole would have been played by a particular spoon on this or that or that occasion.

Has anything amusing ever happened to you in connection with a spoon?

No.

NEXT WEEK: J.K. Rowling – *"Me and My Pencil Sharpeners".*

DIARY

YVONNE RIDLEY
In the Hands of the Taliban

Let's face it, guys, September 11th was a truly memorable day. From that day on, Yvonne Ridley was the name on the lips of the world.

It started out as per normal. I woke at six am, paid the barman, said my ta-ra's and went into my high-powered office at the world-famous *Sunday Express* where I'd worked for the past six years as a legendary reporter.

I'd set aside five hours for filling in the week's expenses when I was rudely interrupted by my legendary colleagues. They told me the twin towers had collapsed owing to an uncalled-for bout of terrorism.

Talk about terrible tragedy! I'd been a top-ranking news journalist long enough to know a story when I saw one. Let's face it, the twin towers were hardly what you'd call a bungalow. Quite the opposite, in fact.

I knew I'd have to act – and fast. Within less than an hour and three-quarters, I'd finished my expenses. After nipping down to our local watering-hole for a quickie (or three!) I found myself sitting with my Louis Vuitton holdall in a prime club-class window-seat with all the executive trimmings on the first plane out of Heathrow, my heart pounding and racing in swift succession. This was the biggest story of the century – and I was on to it. Who was responsible for this unspeakable crime? My hunch was Lord Lucan. But so far I had no definite proof.

When I got to Sydney, Australia, I leapt into a cab. "Twin Towers – and fast!" I yelled – only to be unceremoniously informed that I was in the wrong country. Talk about cock-ups! My informant at the *Sunday Express* must have been thinking of the wrong building – probably the Sydney Opera House, the legendary opera house in Sydney, Australia, which was, alas, still in one piece – just my luck!

I'll be honest: I threw a right wobbly and went ballistic. I rang the office. "Give me the Chief News Reporter!" I barked.

"I think she's in Sydney," came the reply. Trust Ridley! In all the excitement, I'd clean forgot that I was the Chief News Reporter. I was in a living nightmare. There was just one thing I wanted at that moment – a cuddle, a bottle of bubbly, good sex and breakfast in bed. And, let's face it, girls, how many of us get THAT every day!?!?

Like the legendary journalist that I was, I reversed straight into change-of-plan mode. By now, there was one name that had ousted even Michael Barrymore from the headlines. Osama Bin Laden. I was dead set on achieving my ultimate goal of an exclusive face-to-face interview with the guy, and hang the fact I hadn't had my roots done in a fortnight, and the state of my nails was fast becoming a tragedy.

I arrived breathless in Pakistan. I found it a land of contrasts. My aim was to get into Afghanistan, so I found myself a guide. He was a man of contrasts. He had cold emerald eyes, one on each side of his face. I waved some notes under his swarthy nose. "I want to go to hell and back," I said.

He looked at me suspiciously, his dusky eyes slipping down his vexed nose. Men! I waved more money. His eyes seemed to warm up, changing from emerald to hazel-brown and then to azure blue. Within minutes, he had stuffed me in the boot and we were crossing over the border into Afghanistan. I found it a land of contrasts. Hills, valleys, people, the lot.

Clad in burqa and a false beard, I was frozen with fear. If ever they discovered I was the legendary reporter from the *Sunday Express*, I could face death and even imprisonment. Charming! So using the cunning I had learnt from 23 years as a top-level undercover journalist, I resolved to tell them I was from the *Daily Mail*.

Throughout our nightmare journey – talk about B roads! – I compiled a list of the questions I would put to Bin Laden. I would start with one or two to soften him up, and then move on to the heavies.

- Osama – that's an unusual name. How did you come by it?
- Fave member of HearSay?
- *EastEnders* or *Brookside*?
- So why did you do it, then? You know what I'm talking about!
- Are you a Charlie Dimmock fan like the rest of us? Or for no-nonsense advice do you prefer Alan Titchmarsh?

But I was never to be granted the opportunity to put these quessies to him. As I was walking through a market clad in my black headscarf and burqa, I was arrested. Just my luck!

No one had told me I couldn't wear hot-pants.

I was put in a makeshift prison cell. It was a prison of contrasts, a real roller-coaster. I couldn't help wondering about my legendary colleagues on the *Sunday Express*. When they saw the unfinished expenses claims on my desk, they'd be wondering where I was. Little did I know they'd already set up a top-level campaign to get me out of the hands of the Taliban. The Free Yvonne Ridley jamjar in the snug had already amassed £12.04. And the TV listings staff still hadn't been in.

Prison was a living nightmare, a real bad hair day and not a bottle of Jack Daniel's in sight. Facilities were poor, food disappointing and service at best sporadic. As an experienced top-flight journalist, I knew all about the psychology of hostage-taking, so I did my best to bond with my swarthy captors. "So what's with the beards, guys?" I jested. When their mahogany eyes shot back angry glances, I swiftly added, "Actually, I'm a big, big fan of Roger Whittaker. Always have been! Tell me, do you guys whistle at all?" When that didn't work, I threw another of my famous wobblies. "Okay. I am Yvonne Ridley of the *Sunday Express*!" I announced. They were visibly shaken. " – and if you lot don't release me NOW," I added, "I'll put you in our 'Raspberry of the Week' column – and that's a promise!"

Needless to say, I was back within the fortnight. I returned to a hero's welcome at the *Express*, where the Free Yvonne Ridley fund had already topping the £22 mark, including £1.75 sent in by my loyal readers, bless 'em.

I have fallen in love with many countries. Paris is chic. Rome is Italian. Athens is historic. And Venice is a city of canals. But I have lost my heart to Afghanistan, land of contrasts. And I promise the swarthy inhabitants of that once-proud land this: I, Yvonne Ridley, will return. But don't get the wrong idea, guys – that doesn't mean you can all have a shag!

As told to
CRAIG BROWN

Celeb

LIGGER

SO YOU SPENT THE FESTIVE HOLIDAY SEASON IN ENGLAND THIS TIME? RADICAL, GARY!
YEAH. I THOUGHT SOD BARBADOS AND ALL THAT SUPERFICIAL SHOWBIZ BULLSHIT, LET'S HAVE A SIMPLE FAMILY XMAS AT HOME.
ENJOY IT?
NAH. IT WAS A BIT OF A LETDOWN TO BE HONEST. WE WON'T DO IT AGAIN.
THE KIDS WERE ALL REALLY HOPING FOR A TRADITIONAL WHITE CHRISTMAS BUT UNFORTUNATELY IT WASN'T TO BE...
THE BLOODY ARTIFICIAL SNOW MACHINE PACKED IN.
WHAT A BITCH, MAN.

Literary Review

Hiss 'n' Tel

The Gatekeeper: A Memoir
Terry Eagleton
(Allen Lane/Penguin Press, £9.99)

DEAR me, one never ceases to be amazed by the sheer youthfulness of those media dons. I mean, here's Terry for example, our Tel, Professor Eagleton, a veteran of every hot cultural controversy since the days of the Vietnam War. Surely the old boy must be touching 70 by now? But no, our man turns out to be some months short of his 60th birthday.

There must be something in the high table aquavit that keeps them sprightly. At any rate, all this – the books, the broadsheet tourneying, the zealous interventions into so many areas of what passes for intellectual life these days, looks set to continue for a good many years yet.

This is Terry's autobiography, sort of, edited highlights of that champion autodidact's progress from Salford slum to Oxford quad (the Prof is currently in charge of, ah, Cultural Theory at the University of Manchester) and settlement day is nigh. The list of people, institutions and received opinions that Terry wants to get back at is too extensive for wholesale reproduction, but a brief selection might include the Catholic church, the social conditions of post-war Lancashire, snooty dons, snooty undergraduates, toffs, the middle classes, working-class Conservatives, Thatch . . .

For all the knockabout humour along the way, the quality of Terry's distaste for, say, the college porter in whose house he lodged while a Cambridge undergrad is really rather startling in its intensity. Many of these targets, it must be said, were well worth taking a pot at, but somehow our Tel never lets up. Like a kingsize Alsatian worrying a very small rat, he won't stand aside until the beast lies in shredded fragments beneath his paws.

There is an art to public score-settling of this kind, of course. It consists of leavening your resentment with lashings of robust comedy (so the punters laugh) and not a little self-deprecation (so the punters can imagine that they are laughing at you) but not, one hastens to add, *that* much. The trick is to convince the reader that you are man enough to send yourself up while still emerging as the unob-

trusive hero of the piece. Terry has this technique down to a T, notably in the opening chapter about the Carmelite nunnery where his 10-year-old incarnation served as gatekeeper (this gives the book its title) and altar boy.

Watching a pair of proud Catholic parents bidding farewell to their novitiate daughter, now marooned on the other side of the convent grille, Eagleton is struck by the thought that "the young creature behind the bars was some exotic, well-nigh extinct species, the reverend mother was her proud keeper and her parents a couple of venerating animal enthusiasts". Terry stands respectfully by as "they groped sniffling from the room like a couple of blind beggars. Somebody had to do the shit jobs".

Yes indeed. But happily the path away from these simple people – their beliefs relentlessly exposed and derided by the mature Eagleton's pitiless intelligence (he's so bright, our Tel, so sharp that he doesn't notice the wounds he inflicts on himself) – led upward. It was goodbye to teenage girls who "deliberately threw their lives away".

The rest of *The Gatekeeper* – Cambridge, Oxford and my learned friends – provides the ever instructive spectacle of a man continually reinventing himself to suit whatever projection of his personal myth he imagines is appropriate to the circumstance in hand. There is Eagleton the radical Catholic theologian, Eagleton the hair-splitting Marxist ideologue (and yes, the jokes about whichever splinter group it was he demonstrated with outside the Cowley works are not *quite* as riotous as they might be – this was a serious endeavour, don't you know, even if there were only five of us), Eagleton the literary theorist.

Just lately the air has turned horribly colonial and we get a lot of stuff about Ireland, the Irish, Terry's Hibernian roots (he's third generation) and above all Oscar ("this English-Irish Oxfordian proto-post-structuralist socialist" etc) to whom Eagleton seems to feel some strange affinity.

If nothing else, *The Gatekeeper* is a social document of immense value. Significantly, the chief alliances our hero seems able to form are with nobs –1 he had Lord David Cecil to thank for his first academic job. Even more significant – witness Roger Scruton's review of this in last week's *Times* – the establishment seems finally to have decided that Terry, for long held at arm's length as a fire-breathing lefty yob, should now, in the guise of "loveable rogue", be pressed to its ever-forgiving bosom.

Poor old Tel! His fury must be unimaginable. Alas, despite his unwillingness to forgive, he forgot one of the elementary rules: if you're going to make a career out of biting the hand that feeds you, you should do the job properly and gnaw it off at the wrist. Anything else risks the rebel's worst nightmare — a pat on the head from the people you despise.

WHAT YOU DIDN'T MISS, Pt 94

Martin Amis previews *Iris*

. . . John Bayley has already given us the brusque, baroque tragedy of Dame Iris's decline in three lissomly meditative acts: namely *Iris*, *Iris and the Friends* and the more moistly externalised and in fact invented *Widower's House*. Richard Eyre's movie achieves assiduous imbrication with the main lines of Bayley's narrative, yet there is a tumbleweed's ripple of creative defiance. He has taken a story saturated with quiddity, oddity and solidity, adulterated with passion and fashion, and imbued it with the eternal. How?

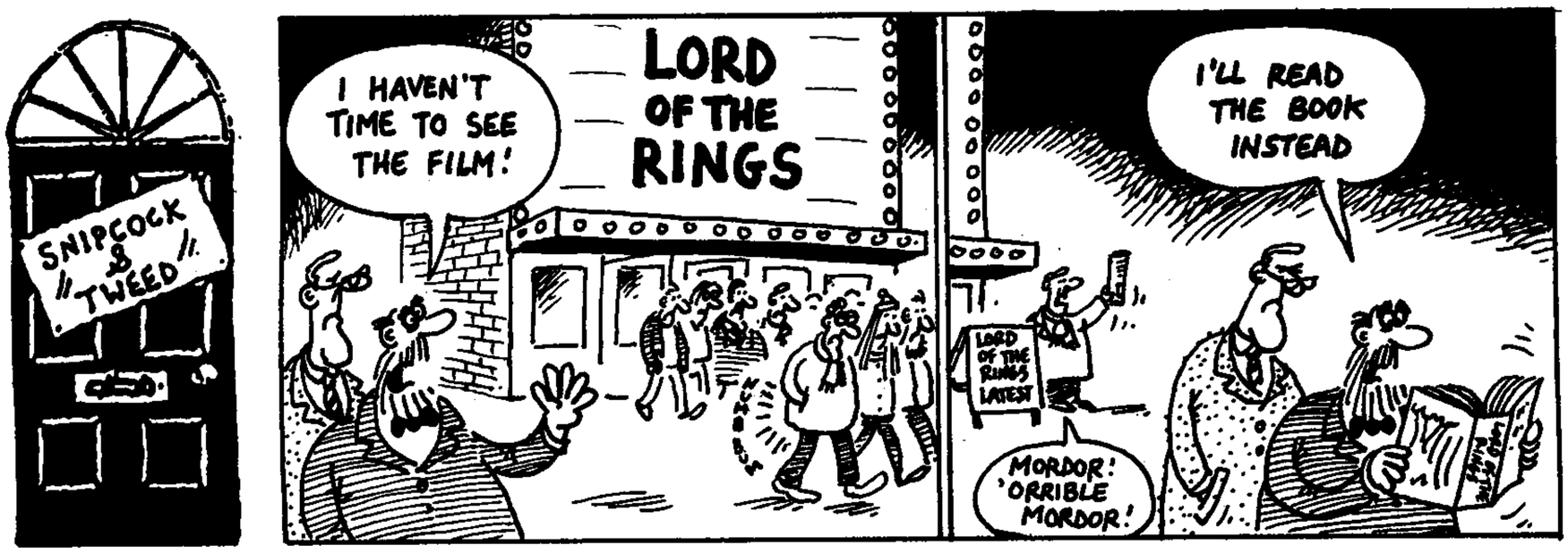
Throughout, the film oscillates tremulously through its twin force fields: an almost algebraical approach to the time-schemes of past and present. Crustaceanly cruising through the vertiginous minefields of later life, the pair are caught short, laid low, done down: Dr Alzheimer is at the door. In the amplitude of his embrace, death feels like a nightlight glimpsed through the rank and startling dawn. You don't mess with Dr A. No sir. "It will win" the pathologist pithily pronounces. There is – let us be resplendently mature about this – no truce with time.

Eyre's film is built on the adroitly assembled *chaise longues* of four performances. As the young Iris, drowning in the fabulous effusions of her talent, Kate Winslet is perhaps too cramped by her winsomeness, but the seriousness of her gaze suggests the amplitudinous magnitude of what lies beneath. Hugh Bonneville and Jim Broadbent offer an almost rampant seamlessness. As for Judi Dench... I knew Iris. I basked timorously in the glare of that plangent, fey yet salubrious smile. It is as if Dame Judi and Dame Iris were on a mid-ozone collision course that the suavest of air traffic controllers couldn't defacilitate. Her performance has the rarest quality known to art: that of knowing when to stop. John Updike has said... *(continues endlessly)*

BOOKS & BOOKMEN

■ IN HIS new book *Blue Note Records – The Biography*, jazz writer Richard Cook is passionate about the old days and old ways of the record business. "These days, they don't have record labels any more," he argues in his preface. "The titles and what have you are impressed directly on to little silver discs, which are offered to us by gigantic corporations, most of which operate as if they were selling breakfast cereal or shoe polish. I don't want this story to sound nostalgic, but it was a very different time."

Later in the book, discussing Blue Note's 1960s takeover by a much larger company, Cook notes that a "line had crept in under the faithful Blue Note logo... 'A Product of Liberty Records' (in the same way that, in the nineties, the proud group of independent labels,


SNIPCOCK & TWEED
I HAVEN'T TIME TO SEE THE FILM!
LORD OF THE RINGS
I'LL READ THE BOOK INSTEAD
LORD OF THE RINGS LATEST
MORDOR! 'ORRIBLE MORDOR!

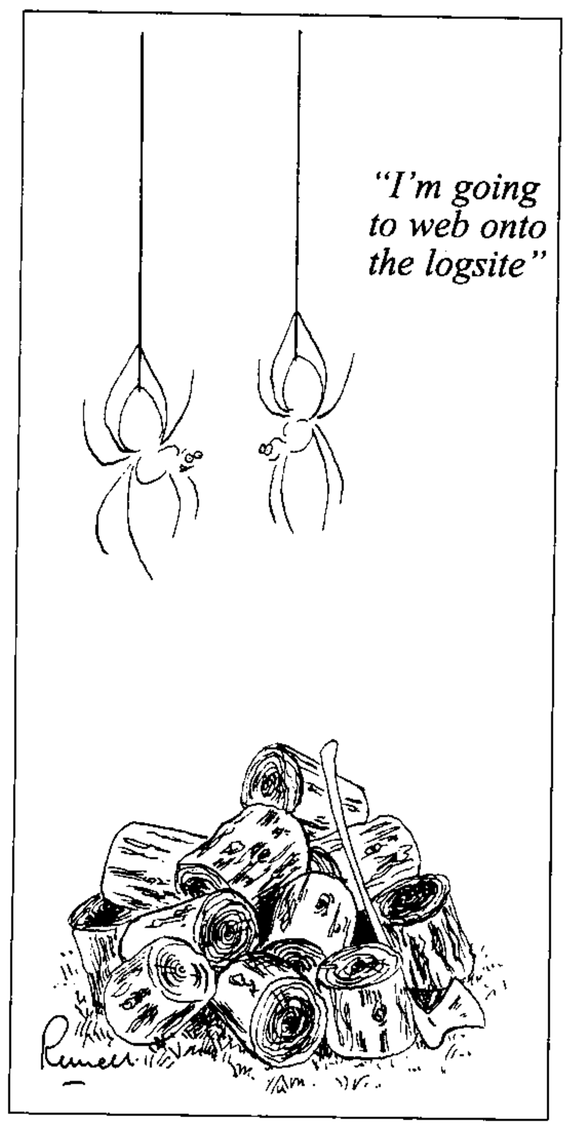
proud group of independent labels, including Verve, MPS, MGM and the like now have their logos disfigured on reissue CDs by the words 'A Universal Company', reminding us all that corporate vanity is alive and well)."

Is the Richard Cook that makes these illuminating but rather tangential points related to the Richard Cook who, in the 90s, was responsible for PolyGram/Universal's jazz reissue CD programme? Indeed so.

■ WHO'S Who Publications... er, who they? The implication of the company's name is obviously that it is associated in some way with the annual *Who's Who* directory. But not so: that book is published by A&C Black, now part of Bloomsbury. Whoever they are or claim to be, they have been writing dutifully to "Britain's best performing business leaders" for the *Official 2002 Who's Who of Britain's Business Elite*

"Your outstanding business achievements have been noted by our editorial panel and qualify you to be entered in the 2002 volume," writes publisher R.J.L. Nisbet. This is recognised by no less a figure than the secretary of state for trade and industry Patricia Hewitt, who has authored the book's introduction and "sends her warmest congratulations and has expressed her admiration for those who are shaping the future of the British economy." Featured individuals can, he adds, purchase the book at a special one-off price of £35. A bargain?

Not in the opinion of "one of Britain's best performing business leaders". Graham Thomas once ran a health food company called Thomas Health Products Ltd specialising in health food supplements. The company is now, however, dormant and Thomas has



spent the last few years working as an IT consultant.

"If I am a best-performing business leader, then I am also a monkey's uncle," he observes. "It's a vanity publication. They're probably waiting to see how many people are foolish enough to pay up before printing any copies. I doubt if we'll see it in any bookshops."

Certainly Amazon lists no such title either for 2002 or any previous editions. Thomas has sent a letter to Patricia Hewitt asking if she really had agreed to put her name to such a dubious book, but he has yet to receive a reply.

■ IS ALL well at Blackwells, the Oxford bookseller which took over its Cambridge counterpart Heffers a couple of years ago?

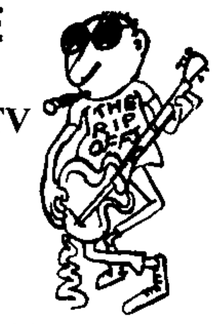
For years, Heffers has offered a much-loved and well-used account-based service for customers who don't live near the university town, many of them overseas. Before Christmas, however, customers were told that all existing accounts were being scrapped in favour of a "new style Personal Account Card", usable at both Heffers and Blackwells. Among the delights offered by the card is eligibility to attend account holder events in-store – which is a waste of time, considering the wide geographical spread.

The real reason becomes clear later in the letter. The new approach, under which all accounts are to paid monthly by direct debit, allows Blackwells to tailor "the service to meet the needs of enthusiastic book buyers, with an expected annual expenditure of £200 or more". Anyone spending less, it is implied, can sod off.

■ NESTLING in the January-June 2002 Hodder & Stoughton Religious Books catalogue, among spiritually-enhancing titles such as *Finding God in Unexpected Places, In the Beginning – the story of the King James Bible* and *A Treasury of Christian Wisdom*, one book looks oddly out of place.

Monsters and Men by Bob Long and Bob McLaughlin is a "compelling and disturbing book based on a major BBC2 landmark series in which a BBC film crew shadows the work of Scotland Yard's Paedophile Unit for a year... its] purpose... is primarily educational... but it is also preventative." All very well and laudable, but nowhere does the blurb make even a tenuous attempt to connect with any aspect of religion, say, mentioning the odd dirty vicar or two.

POPYEYE



SIGNING the rejects from the hit TV show *Popstars* for £2.5m has landed Richard Branson's record label V2 in a spot of bother.

Despite checking with music industry database the Band Register and discovering that the name had been in use for more than a decade, V2 decided to call its new band Liberty. Now the original Liberty, a funk band which has won national awards and supported Wet Wet Wet in concert, is taking V2 to court claiming the record giant has pinched its name and prevented it from distributing their own material.

V2 maintains that "Liberty" is a generic word used as a name by several bands. It is a mystery, however, why V2 didn't just call the new band "Flopstars" like everyone else as that is what they are sure to be before the year's out.

THE Dirty Digger's trendy young scion James, who supposedly manages Star TV in Hong Kong as his day job, has fallen victim to his own bad judgement in the volatile world of popular music.

Having nearly stuffed the Digger's 100 percent-owned Australia-based Festival records a few years back, he has now been forced to close his US hobby label, Rawkus. His portfolio of hip hop artists and dj acts – including such eminent achievers as the Beatminerz, Hi Tek and Evil Dee – didn't take kindly to his suggestion that the best way to sell their CDs was to pay for their own promotion.

They left the label along with most of the staff. The LA shut down was in October and now the New York office has been forced to let its staff go too.

Pseuds Corner

As evidence of her proficiency in the kitchen and her love of celebrity chefs, Michelle Clark, 29, from Southampton, had decided to make Nigella Lawson's spaghetti and meatballs. Beating the domestic goddess at her own game, she had even decided to make the pasta herself, kneading, pummelling and passing the dough through her pasta machine. But as the guests arrived, it all went horribly wrong...The shame still haunts her. "Now I can't bear cooking for people," she said. "I felt so vulnerable. You are putting your soul on the table for them." Clark is not alone. According to a new report, the fear of such a kitchen crisis can cause mental blocks, nausea, headaches and difficulty in breathing; all symptoms of a newly identified disorder dubbed kitchen performance anxiety syndrome.

Sunday Times

Buffy's particular combination of knowledge and power places her outside the mainstream of superheroes and leads to particular ideas of learning, of spirituality, and of citizenship, which challenge the dominant discourses of Western patriarchy.

ZOE-JANE PLAYDEN
(contribution to Roz Kaveney, ed)
Reading the Vampire Slayer

I once asked Paul (who I knew slightly better than George) where his music came from, how, as untrained musicians, they had come to compose music of such complexity. His answer, curiously, was the same as Harrison Birtwistle's to the same question: I don't know...

MICHAEL BERKELEY
Guardian

PRISONERS' LAVENDER

From the lavender fields of Reigate Hill on south facing slopes of the North Downs, tended by convicts serving life terms. It is difficult to parse the element that is quintessentially masculine in this fragrance. Perhaps the flinty quality of all English lavenders is sharper here, where the breaking of rocks by chain gangs of the past has imbued the soil with something that, when it gets free, is hard to capture. Perhaps the word we need is "fugitive".

From a catalogue issued by
'First Impressions'

Pseuds Corporate

Words. What are yours?

I love direction, edge, brand, emotion, new, ambition, achieve, love, selling, create, renew, needs, unique, dashboard, now.

I hate cascade, low-hanging fruit, roll-out, quick fix, questionnaire, empowerment, mission statement, feasibility study, marketing when it means advertising, KPI.

CRISPIN TWEDDELL
Retail Week

The first age of advertising was merely persuasion, the second seduction, and now we are entering the prime of life, the age of integration. No creative idea will find house-room unless it is capable of boosting with the same force of imagination an ad, a poster, a commercial, an event, a promotion, a mail shot. A chain reaction will be created in which the activation of each new connecting nucleus will release a surplus of energy. In this giant cyclotron, creation becomes inter-reaction. The important thing is not to create in parts but as a whole. And who is better placed to do this but our group, focused on integration and concentrating all the disciplines of communication, once disparate, now convergent. Our whole creative ambition is to bring together the multiplication of communicating signs into a unique dreamspace of the brand. Once we were the inventors of scattered dreams, now we are the federators of multiple realities, but also, and more than ever, each of us in our own task, soldiers of the imagination...

JACQUES SEGUELA, Executive Vice-President and Chief Creative Officer of Havas Advertising, from their website

CONTRIBUTORS: Lorna Stroup Nilsson, Dave Flynn, Andrew Register, Lucy Gaskell, John Hobson, Anon

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

DUST TO DUST, ASHES TO ASHES

MORE than 100 years ago a factory inspector decided it was dangerous for employers to spread asbestos in the atmosphere and more than 50 years ago the first laws were passed to ban the practice.

Utterly careless of such laws and the lethal illnesses they were intended to prevent, big firms all over the world, led by Turner and Newall of Manchester, went on making money by recklessly and negligently poisoning their workplaces and the environment with asbestos. More and more workers contracted deadly diseases, the worst of which was mesothelioma, a cancer of the lining of the lungs that always kills and is always caused by inhaling asbestos fibre.

About 20 years ago the victims of this and similar diseases started to sue the companies responsible for negligence. None of the firms had even a remotely valid defence. Many poisoned workers died before they could collect damages, but at least substantial damages were awarded. Now the big asbestos firms and the courts have joined forces to make sure the payment of damages to compensate asbestos victims is stopped.

In 2001 several insurance companies facing heavy claims for asbestos damage – Chester Street, Drake and Independent – went bust. Harassed by backbench MPs and worried by the election, the government cobbled together a deal with the Association of British Insurers, whereby most of the outstanding asbestos claims would be met by the insurance industry. The deal, however, only applied to firms properly insured with outside companies. These did not include the biggest British asbestos killer, Turner and Newall, which claims it is self-insured and was anyway snapped up in 1998 by the US industrial combine, Federal Mogul.

In October Federal Mogul filed for voluntary bankruptcy under Chapter 11 in the US and "administration" under Britain's insolvency act. Did this mean the giant was going broke? Of course it didn't. A Federal Mogul press release promised: "We will continue business operations without interruption and with the full support of major customers and suppliers."

Customers and suppliers could breathe easily, which is more than could be said for former employees suffering from asbestos diseases. All the legal cases alleging asbestos poisoning by Turner and Newall were "stayed".

Mesothelioma victim Kenneth Hall of Leeds was offered £55,000 by Turner and Newall subsidiary J.W. Roberts, and the very next day

Unanimous: Lords Justice Brooke, Kay and Latham

was told he could not collect the money. Another man racked with asbestos-related disease got a cheque for £38,000 compensation, and paid it into the bank where it bounced.

Sheffield solicitors Irwin Mitchell, who have more than 50 cases of former Turner and Newall workers with deadly asbestos diseases, doubt whether any of their clients will get anything – certainly not until after a very long delay by which time most of them will be dead. One hundred and thirty three British asbestos companies, all subsidiaries of Turner and Newall, have filed for insolvency to get out of their commitments to former workers suffering and dying because of their employers' negligence.

Three days before Christmas Barnsley Labour MP Michel Clapham asked the chancellor of the exchequer a series of questions about the behaviour of the asbestos insurance companies and Turner and Newall. He asked, for instance, what measures the chancellor will introduce to stop companies and insurers avoiding their insurance liabilities and to protect asbestos sufferers from the reorganisation of Federal Mogul and its new subsidiary Turner and Newall.

The answer came from Ruth Kelly, economic secretary to the treasury. After setting out the grim facts in a most uncritical manner, Kelly said she was "not able to make further comments about Turner and Newall's insurance arrangement or payment of compensation claims".

At almost exactly the same time, Britain's senior judges had a splendid chance to put some of these wrongs right. The court of appeal dealt with a case brought by Judith Fairchild. Her late husband Arthur died of mesothelioma contracted from asbestos fibre inhaled at his work. He had been exposed to asbestos in premises owned by John Waddington, the board game manufacturers, and by Leeds city council. In both workplaces there was plenty of asbestos illegally spewed into the atmosphere, and no one doubted that Mr Fairchild had become another asbestos victim in one or both of them. In a landmark judgment the appeal judges (Brooke, Latham and John Kay), unanimously concluded that because Mr Fairchild couldn't prove which of the two employers had poisoned him, he could not be compensated by either of them.

The judgment was greeted with undisguised triumph on the front page of the big insurers' house journal, *The Post Magazine*. "ASBESTOS PURSE CLOSED," it exulted. Solicitor Chris Phillips, whose firm had represented one of the defendant companies, told the paper there was more good news in store. "The logic in Fairchild," he wrote, "may be applicable to any claim where a single act causes damage – this could include any form of cancer". Edwin Matthews, a former lagger/boilerman from Kent, couldn't quite see the point. He had been awarded £155,000 by Mr Justice Mitting, a Manchester judge, against firms that poisoned him with asbestos several years ago. The three appeal judges in the Fairchild case have now ensured that Mr Matthews cannot claim his money, and can die in agony without any of the negligent firms responsible having to pay a penny.

LYNDE HOUSE: THE LIST GOES ON

MORE claims of neglect and suffering at the £600-a-week Lynde House old people's home in Twickenham reach the *Eye*. They follow our report (*Eye* 1043) that an independent inspector had been called to investigate the home run by Westminster Healthcare, a company whose head is Tony Blair's private health guru, Dr Chai Patel.

Louise Smith, whose parents were at the home for nearly four months, urges the *Eye* to "keep up the pressure" on Lynde House. She says she heard a particular woman patient there being slapped on two separate occasions.

Eye readers will recall how Kingston and Richmond health authority called in an independent inspector after local MP Dr Vince Cable received a catalogue of disturbing allegations about the home. These included claims of residents being left in their own waste, unexplained bruising, delay in getting medical attention and alarm bells being left unanswered. Recent statements provided to the *Eye* catalogue further disturbing claims.

Alex Edmonds' 81-year-old aunt "H" was admitted to Lynde House early last year. Ms Edmonds described how she twice arrived at the home to find H injured. The first time she was "covered from head to foot in bruises", apparently after falling out of bed. In the four months she was in the home before her death, she fell several more times. On another occasion her aunt was found bleeding profusely from the mouth. The old lady was given medication to stop the flow, but was not taken to hospital.

The next day a care worker called to say there appeared to be a huge growth in H's mouth. Later she called back to say it had been a foreign object, which had now been removed. On another occasion Ms Edmonds found her aunt sitting in front of an untouched breakfast, her left hand closed and useless and the left side of her face slightly lopsided, indicating a stroke.

Ms Edmonds said her aunt's nails were often caked in faeces and she would have to clean her herself when she arrived. Cups and plates were left in the room to gather mould and soiled pads were left in bins in the room. "I often went to the home to find her sitting in front of untouched food simply because she wasn't able to feed herself. This struck me as a form of torture.

"Towards the end of her life H was constantly bruised and no explanation was ever given apart from the fact that she was very elderly and bruised easily. I'm not suggesting that there was actual abuse, but I think a degree of rough or careless, untrained handling may have been to blame."

The Wren family from Hampton said they had such grave concerns about the care their elderly friend "JB" was receiving at Lynde that in September they asked to be allowed to employ a private nurse for her. The home asked for a month to improve things. In the meantime JB died. Kathleen Wren says she visited her friend on 24 October and found her ill with a nasty cough and congested chest. "She was very distressed and in a lot of pain and very unwell. Her balcony door was propped open with a pillow and it was not a particularly warm day." She was assured that a doctor would be called. But no doctor was summoned until two days later, when antibiotics were prescribed for a "bad chest infection". Over the weekend her condition deteriorated and the following Monday she died.

"We do not consider that the time Joyce lived at Lynde House was enjoyable for her or that she was well looked after. We all quite frequently found her in dirty clothes… her hair was frequently extremely greasy and the smell of urine from her was unbearable at times."

The families and residents of Lynde House say they were forced to turn to the local MP after complaints to Westminster Healthcare went largely unanswered and after the numerous health authority inspections gave the home a clean bill.

The authority says that its priority now is to "review current standards and ensure that regulations are being met". But it has asked the inspector to review "the current complaint made by Dr Vincent Cable which includes several reported concerns that date back a number of years".

Jonathan Street, of Westminster Healthcare, maintained that Lynde House has always been a high quality care home that has been subject to very few complaints. "This is borne out by the independent inspections reports and the recent survey of current relatives and their families, conducted by the health authority. It has received 59 favourable responses and four negative."

BATTLE OF TRAFALGAR

FIVE and half years ago, in June 1996, John Wilson, a 16-year-old schoolboy from Horsham, Sussex, and two of his friends watched the Euro' 96 semi-final between England and Germany. England lost on penalties, and the youngsters, after consulting their parents, decided to join other fans in Trafalgar Square.

The atmosphere there was jovial, but at one stage there was some violence when a police car was attacked. John and his friends were watching the attack when suddenly a policeman wielding a truncheon and shield charged at John and battered him to the ground. John's head smashed on to the pavement. Unconscious and drenched in blood, he was rushed to hospital. His skull was fractured. He has been seriously ill with epilepsy ever since and cannot resume his studies.

John Wilson sued the Metropolitan police. Police lawyers repeatedly challenged his right to legal aid, but were beaten off largely thanks to the persistence of the Wilsons' solicitor, James Bell. At last, in July 2001, the case came to court.

After hearing the evidence and studying a video of the incident, Mr Justice Morland emphasised that he had "no criticism whatever of police strategy that night". He was, however, astonished that the policeman who had struck John Wilson – and all 25 other police in the same unit – could not be found. He pointed out that any policeman involved in any injury to any member of the public has a duty to record the incident. No such record was available.

Then on 27 June this year, a few days before the hearing ("a surprisingly late date", according to the judge) an e-mail (described by the judge as "oddly-worded") was sent to every officer in the Met asking the man responsible for the attack on John to come forward. No one did so. "In my judgement," said Mr Justice Morland, "the facts that the officer who collided with the claimant remains unidentified and that no police documents relating to the incident have emerged are consistent with the claimant's case that he was the victim of a deliberate, unlawful assault."

The judge rejected the police case that John's injuries resulted from an accidental collision. He'd

John Wilson, assaulted by the Met

seen the video often. "Each time I became more and more convinced that it was no accidental collision, but a deliberate assault upon the claimant who, innocently but unwisely, had stopped to watch the attack on the police car… I am utterly convinced that the claimant was the victim of a deliberate unlawful assault. Therefore judgment must be entered for the claimant for damages to be assessed… I want the trial fixed within a week beginning some Monday in January/February 2002."

But there is no hope the case will be heard this month or next. Three times the police lawyers asked for permission to appeal against Mr Justice Morland's decision. Morland himself said no, and the application went to Lord Justice Sedley, who also said no. On 31 August, in his own handwriting, Sedley wrote on the papers: "This is a cautious and meticulously considered judgment of an extremely experienced judge. Even if (which I do not accept) this court were as well placed as he was to evaluate the evidence, I am not persuaded that it would differ from him. But the judgment comes on an impeccable basis of law, to an entirely sustainable finding of fact, and that is the end of the matter."

Not so. The police demanded a full hearing before two lords justices. On 23 October the case was heard again by Lords Justice Sedley and Laws. Laws said he couldn't make out what happened from the video, and insisted that the case should go to full appeal.

Mrs Susan Wilson, John's mother, meanwhile had been doing everything in her power to get the police, or the Metropolitan police authority (chairman: "new" Labour lord Toby Harris) to find out what happened to her son. So far she has had no success.

MMR: A STAB IN THE DARK

THE government and medical establishment have only themselves to blame for the reports last weekend of an "alarming" and "dangerous" drop in the take-up of the MMR vaccine.

The BSE scandal is still too fresh in everybody's mind for the public to accept that something is safe just because government scientific and health advisers and an expensive advertising campaign say it is.

Last month's Medical Research Council (MRC) review of autism, which again declared that there was no evidence to support a link between the triple jab and autism, is just more of the same. In fact no one has yet said there *is* a definite link. What Dr Andrew Wakefield and now other researchers here and abroad have uncovered is the *possibility* of link. The response of the medical establishment has been to force Wakefield out of his job rather than undertake meaningful research which might prove him wrong – for example, by initiating an international study comparing vaccinated with unvaccinated children. Nor does the MRC report recommend such a study.

Given public alarm in Britain, fuelled by the Blair family's claims to privacy, another major disappointment is the MRC paper's failure to recommend proper monitoring and recording of autism rates in the UK. It suggests, from what figures are available, that the rate among children now is about one in every 166. That is a huge leap from the official figure published in the *Oxford Textbook of Psychiatry* in 1988, which suggested the figure was one per 2,200 of the population.

What the MRC paper does suggest is that methodological differences between studies, changes in diagnostic practice and public and professional awareness are likely causes of the apparent increase. This begs a question. If diagnosis is better, why hasn't a huge increase in diagnosis in the adult population also been noticed or recorded? The report states only that the prevalence in the adult population is "not known", but doesn't suggest we find it out.

Yet in Shetland and the Scottish isles, for example, every diagnosed autistic child is now aged 13 or under. In fact in some areas where autism rates have been monitored, the figures are even more alarming. Cambridge researchers have found one autistic child per 100. A similar figure emerges from the local education authority in East Surrey. Among boys the figure rises to one in 69.

Similar increases are reported in Europe: in Sweden, one in 141 in children with IQs of over 70; in Finland a four-fold increase from 1979 to 1994 among five to seven year olds. In the US, New Jersey reports an increase of 876 percent in eight years, Illinois a 627 percent increase in six years and a 1,200 percent increase in Miami.

Can this explosion – one US researcher, Edward Yazbak, now refers to it as "a silent epidemic" – really simply be better diagnosis? Or is it, as more and more scientists appear to believe, the result of some kind of external trigger or triggers perhaps acting on a genetic predisposition: exposure to drugs, viral infection, heavy metals… or MMR vaccine.

CAP IT ALL, CAPITA

THERE was a nice present for TV licence dodgers before Christmas with the announcement that "service provider" Capita had been awarded a £500m, 10-year contract to collect TV licence fees in place of Consignia, formerly the Post Office, which had had the job for the past 75 years.

Days later Crapita celebrated by being named "preferred bidder" for another huge contract: a £230m, five-year deal to run Mayor Ken's beloved congestion charging scheme for London.

However, with Crapita's reputation preceding it in many parts of the country, where millions of people have already experienced the firm's "transformation" of "outsourced" local council services (*Eyes passim*), one question remains: what so enamoured BBC bosses with its bid?

As the *Eye* has pointed out many times, Capita's real speciality is promising more than it can deliver. The London borough of Lambeth finally lost patience with it last year after years of incompetent administration of its housing benefit (HB) and council tax service, and took the contract back in-house. Tens of thousands of claims had gone unprocessed, leaving poor families facing eviction – although to be fair Crapita sometimes varied the muddle by overpaying claimants to the tune of hundreds of pounds to which they were not entitled.

At Tory Westminster council, the Benefit Fraud Inspectorate (BFI) noted that Capita "needs to improve significantly on its current performance" during 2000. In October 2001 the BFI found that security checks and fraud awareness training were woefully inadequate in Capita's benefit "service" for the London borough of Bromley, leaving the council wide open to fraud. Meanwhile a Metropolitan police audit found that Capita's inefficient handling of payroll and expenses forms could have resulted in staff being paid expenses and overtime they were not entitled to.

The secret of Crapita's success could be summed up in a phrase used on a sales pamphlet from its own lobbying firm, LLM: "We are in-touch and in-tune with the new government, but more importantly we are in-touch and in-tune with the times." In these times delivering public service comes a poor third to delivering profits for shareholders, which Capita is very good at, and reducing costs for Capita's local authority and government customers, something at which the firm is not so hot in the long term.

The initials of the lobbyists employed by Capita, LLM, stand for Ben Lucas, Neil Lawson and John Mendelsohn, three whizzkid political consultants with close links to Labour, having respectively been advisers to Jack Straw, Gordon Brown and Tony Blair prior to the 1997 election.

In 1998 undercover *Observer* journalist Greg Palast, posing as an American businessman seeking influence in the UK, was told by Lawson that LLM could "reach anyone… We can go to Gordon Brown if we have to". It helped that the Labour leadership was lacking in firm convictions and easily swayed, he explained: "Blair himself doesn't always know what he's thinking."

Meanwhile Lucas claimed Downing Street used LLM as a means of communicating with Rupert Murdoch – a form of reverse lobbying – whereby the government lobbies business, rather than business the government. Lucas also claimed: "We got Tesco to put £11m into the millennium dome." When Palast asked Lucas how he squared representing clients as diverse as Tesco, News International and the Consumers' Association he replied: "It's like in the movie, *The Godfather*, it's just business."

One LLM employee who has worked on the Crapita account, Clara Bentham, is a former member of Labour's "rapid rebuttal unit" at Millbank. And you don't get much more in tune with the times than that.

You can contact Paul Foot on 020 7287 3183 or the In the Back team on 020 7437 4017

In the City

SCOTLAND Yard and the FBI are using an innovative tactic in a bid to slow down if not stop the seemingly never-ending number of "high yield investment programmes" scams – those that offer returns beyond the dreams of avarice or even sense from the mysterious trading of exotic and little known financial instruments in supposedly secret and exclusive markets.

Those found peddling or investing in these financial fairy stories are being served with a fraud alert notice warning them that the investment scheme is fraudulent. The purpose of the notice is to strip from any serial offender specialising in the high yield investment programme scam – and there are many, including such past *Eye* favourites as Alan Shephard and Roddam Twiss – the subsequent excuse that they were ignorant of the fraud thereby providing evidence of *mens rea* or criminal intent.

So far Scotland Yard has served three of these warning notices and the FBI two. None of the recipients has yet come back for a second helping. It is understood that the German police will also soon join the scheme.

The notice warns that claims to be able to trade prime bank guarantees or standby letters of credit or that the trading is authorised by the US Federal Reserve, the IMF or the World Bank are untrue. This is backed by statements from two senior US treasury officials. National bank examiner William Kerr points out that the schemes make no financial sense and cannot exist because nobody would sell a risk-free investment, which is what the prime bank and standby letters are supposed to be, at the kind of discount necessary to make the guaranteed profits.

Ever since the government of the South Pacific island of Nauru and then the Salvation Army were taken for $10m rides in the early 90s there has been an epidemic of these high yield frauds featuring standby letters of credit, prime bank guarantees and medium term notes. Investors are never offered less than a guaranteed 10 percent profit a month – some offer up to 600 percent! – from these "roll programmes". Usually they are said to be participating in large pools of $100m or more – in order to play in the game with the big banks – which is why the normal entry fee is a minimum $5 to $10m.

In reality these are little more than dressed up advance fee schemes. The initial investment will be taken and never returned, just like the promised loan never materialises. The initial excuse will be that the money is firmly locked in the "roll programme" and cannot be unlocked without losing all the juicy profits. That will then be played like an answering machine recording until the victim gets the message. Then they have to decide whether to go to the police.

The problem in the past has often been that these frauds are usually layered through a series of brokers and banks to whom the money is passed on the way into the non-existent pool and the fraudsmen's pockets. So the victims are in one country but their money was sent to a second country then onwards offshore and so on. Each broker blames the next link in the chain of fools for the problems of repayment. Law enforcement agencies are faced with a hunt through multiple jurisdictions often with reluctant victims in tow because the investment was made with "black" money undeclared to local tax or other authorities.

Often the schemes work like a chain letter with smaller investors being sucked in by those already committed in order to raise the necessary multi-million entry fee. They then act as salesmen for the scam. They as well as the con men pushing the schemes are likely to be served with the fraud warning notice.

Scotland Yard fraud squad officers are hopeful this will discourage the high yield investment operators. If not it should give them a means to strip away their usual excuse that they believed what they were told – that the scheme was real and worked. If so that should increase the chances of future successful prosecutions which have been thin on the ground although the Yard did have one big success last year. The Nauru fraudsmen were jailed in the US but all those involved in the Salvation Army scam escaped conviction or prosecution. The fraud alert notice should make a difference.

SIMILAR warnings or multiple prosecutions, however, do not seem to have deterred the "419" fraudsmen who continue to bombard cyberspace from West and South Africa with their greedy and exciting tales of $20m or more in cash, gold or diamonds locked in security boxes or trunks just waiting to be opened by a helpful foreigner to pay the necessary expenses and provide bank account details. Needless to say it is the bank account that is emptied.

Email offers from former Nigerian dictator Sani Abacha's wives (Zabina is the latest) and children such as his imprisoned son Mohammed, via helpful Nigerian barristers, flood in.

Newcomers to this "open your bank account and say after me" racket include Crown Prince Abdul Guei, whose claims to be the son of the deposed dictator of Ivory Coast, who has $45m looking for a home. Then there is Prince Sam Sankoh, son to the mere corporal Foday Sankoh whose bloodthirsty Revolutionary United Front troops still control parts of diamond-rich Sierra Leone. Sankoh senior, however, is locked up by the new government. Which is why the prince wants help with $31m which fortunately escaped in a trunk now held in Spain.

Perhaps the sickest of these scams to date comes from someone calling himself Daniel Saro-Wiwa and claiming to be a son of the Nigerian writer and activist Ken Saro-Wiwa, hanged by Abacha because of his support for the Ogoni tribe's battle against the oil companies and their military partners in eastern Nigeria.

Somehow the late Ken Saro-Wiwa has come into $32.5m from a group of no doubt guilt-ridden oil companies which can be shared with anyone prepared to help spirit it into a foreign bank account. So as not to let down the Saro-Wiwa memory 10 percent would then go to "charity organisations". However, the rest would be split 70:20 by Daniel with the helpful foreign account holder. There is no trace of a Daniel Saro-Wiwa and the only money in the game will be the victim's and it will soon be gone if this or any of the other email offers are accepted.

Stock Horror

Chief executive Martin Read sold 768,590 shares in FTSE 100 high-tech company Logica two years ago

What he sold them for...

£19m

What they are worth now...

£5m

US-listed security outfit Armor Holdings has settled civil claims which threatened to produce damaging revelations from two former UK executives. In November Armor settled a claim for breach of contract and unfair dismissal brought by Nick del Rosso, a co-founder of CDR International which Armor bought in 1998. Del Rosso was claiming more than £1m but is expected to have settled for less. His case had threatened to embroil Armor executives in allegations of telephone tapping regarding Richard Bethel, formerly with "mercenaries are us" group DSL which Armor also acquired. The allegations were hotly denied by Armor.

Tom Crowley, who formed CDR with Del Rosso and was accused of organising the illegal bugging, has since also left Armor. He also denied any involvement. Bethel has also settled a case he brought against Armor relating to an indemnity covering a French legal action. But he continues to threaten to sue Armor over the bugging allegations.

THE Gnome Institute for Greed Management's 2001 white collar crime awards are as follows:

Crooks of the Year The entire former board of Equitable Life during the 1990s came close to making Equitable a winner for a second year running, but they were pipped at the post at the last minute by "new" Labour's friends from Houston, Enron, whose spectacular collapse among evidence of huge secret self-enrichment

THE DIRECTORS

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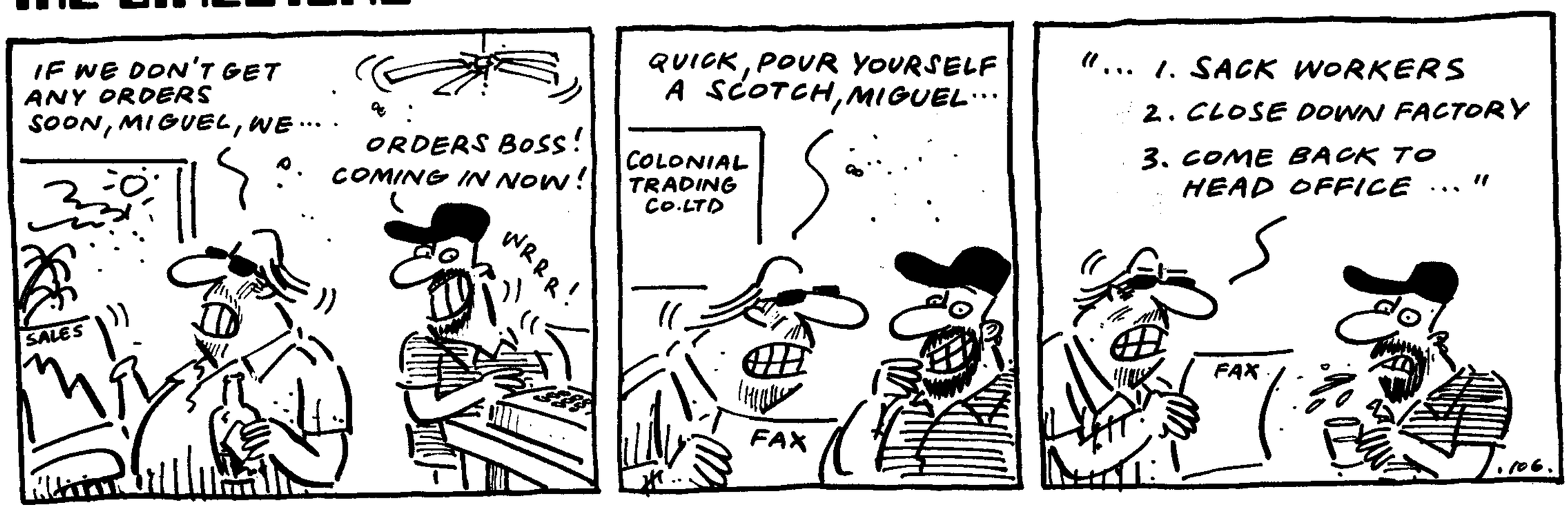


could see Dubya's friend and supporter Ken Lay and other Enron senior suits in the dock.

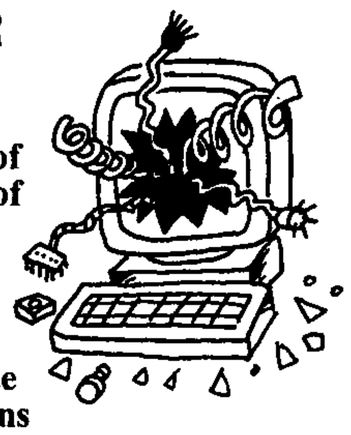
Newcomer of the Year Michael Bright of Independent Insurance, whose novel methods of not providing for risk could have revolutionised insurance but instead has produced a police investigation and many angry creditors.

Escaper of the Year Another close race with Kevin Maxwell avoiding any disqualification proceedings by the pusillanimous Department of Timidity & Inaction justifying its nickname once again and the City Slickers, also not in the DTI frame, for ramping their own shares both in contention. But the prize must go to Minnie Driver's old dad Ronnie who stole more than $50m from London United Investments and got away with it thanks to mistakes by the Serious Farce Office and mostly obstruction by his friends in Liechtenstein.

Suit of the Year A special award for the businessman with the most unlikely achievement during the year. This can only go to Philippe Bruggisser, former chief executive of Swissair, who managed to bankrupt the most respected airline from one of the world's richest countries by assuming that you could build a global empire on acquiring share stakes and lending zillions to a group of heavily loss-making European and South African airlines. A remarkable addition to Switzerland's other great contributions to the world – numbered bank accounts, William Tell and the cuckoo clock.

'Slicker'

COMPUTER NEWS



IF IT is thinking of engaging the services of EDS for another decade, the Revenue should look first at a recent report from the official auditor for the Canadian province of Ontario where EDS runs the "integrated justice project" to develop an electronic system to provide faster and better information sharing between courts, police, the legal establishment and the general public.

The contract to set up and run this system was originally awarded to SHL Systemhouse Co in 1997, but in 1998 SHL was acquired by EDS Canada Incorporated which took over its contracts. In 2001, three years after EDS took over the project, the auditor conducted an inquiry to assess how economically the scheme was being run. The overall conclusions were damning: "The Integrated Justice Project has experienced significant cost increases and delays. While the March 1998 cost estimate to complete the Project was $180 million, the March 2001 estimate had risen to $359 million. Over the same period, expected benefits were reduced from $326 million to $238 million. In addition not all systems are expected to be fully implemented by the contractual deadline of August 2002."

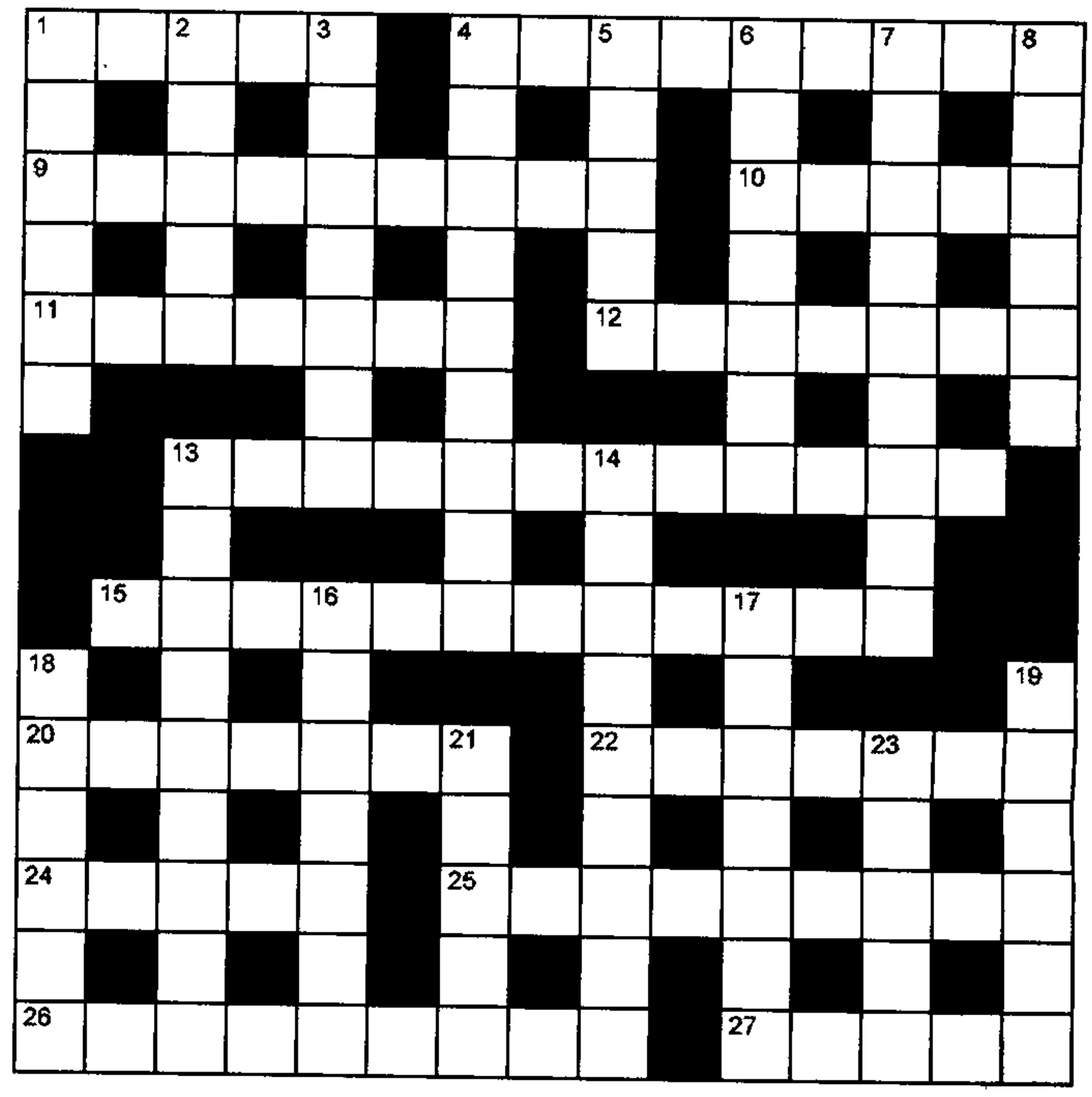
Some shocking facts and figures emerged, such as the fact that EDS was charging $1,200 a day for staff who would have been paid $340 a day if they had worked for the government ministries involved in the project. In several cases the auditor found that documents supporting expenses claims were inadequate or missing, and there were instances of EDS duplicating charges amounting to $95,000 wrongly claimed.

Office rent paid to EDS by the ministry of the attorney general was $220,000 over the sum originally agreed. Furthermore, adequate security measures were not in place to ensure that information transmitted using the police network run by EDS was secure. "As a result, confidential information on victims, suspects and offenders was vulnerable to unauthorized access and tampering," found the auditor's report.

Meanwhile back in the UK EDS staff morale is at an all time low since the announcement on 5 December that all company Christmas parties have been cancelled "to ensure that EDS meets its financial targets this year".

EYE CROSSWORD 200

by Cyclops



£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 18 January 2002.

Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN or via email to crossword@private-eye.co.uk

ACROSS

1 Remove note from member before sex check (5)
4 Dead Poet Society after Edward gets to cuddle the ambassador (3,6)
9 Member, nuts about Italian, for example (9)
10 Prince associates with arseholes and nerds (5)
11 Marsh born into (copper) money (7)
12 Poor Fergie, note, money gone, grabs single bloke – just her type of thing? (7)
13 A pen and a little diversion and Neil comes out with an appropriate description of this one (12)
15 Nut translated 'Danke' as 'au naturel' (7-5)
20 Like the games policy – screwing with maiden (7)
22 Clodhopping Johnson holding ball hard (7)
24 Warner's quite an attraction for sailors (5)
25 Company not renowned for its maintenance produces structure without new trial (9)
26 Pussyfooting, pisspoor petition Gordon just introduced (9)
27 Fools members (5)

DOWN

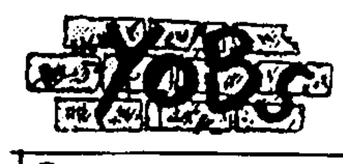
1 Helpful hoists for members having an erection inside (3-3)
2 Queen's Walk pie-filling (5)
3 Disaster: it's about having Brown in charge (7)
4 Unbelievably electing Conservative finally for looking good on the box (9)
5 Grumpy hostility with female following date (5)
6 Lots have sex (not head, though) with a possibly underage person (7)
7 A feature of bed and sexual activity: getting soundly shafted (9)
8 South American mounting flipping O'Connor gets found out (6)
13 Beware of this tit leading Labour possibly getting a rise (5-4)
14 Scurrilous Benn lingo for "creating peers" (9)
16 Foreign article on Dick Whittington's famous engagement (7)
17 Tied up? Get this and bugger off (7)
18 Blimey, tax once used to keep a corporation in check (6)
19 Gags about hard cocaine substitute initially (6)
21 Royal favourite producing appreciative ejaculation by George I (5)
23 After one second Monica's butt gets grabbed by Bill, the patriarch (5)

Crossword 199 winner: GAYNOR WITHERS

Solution to Crossword 199

Across: 1/29/40/78/58/60 T'was on the good ship Venus/ By god you should have seen us/ The figurehead was a whore in bed and/ The mast was a mammoth penis 15/44 Second mate 16 Pink-eye 17 Scrub 18 On bail 19 Redeploy 20 Boatswain 21 Eye-tooth 22 Dress down 24 Lipsticks 25 Ageism 27 Franco-Russian 32 Unbroken 34 Sumatra 37 Lady Muck 39 Captain 42 Assegai 46 Cook 47 Gate-leg 48 Askant 49 Playboy 51 Sean Penn 54 Sultana 56 Cabin boy 62 Imelda 64 Disagreed 67 Aquaplane 69 Unicycle 71 Minnesota 72 Erection 74 Armani 75 Retro 76 Recurve 77 Gossip.

Down: 2 Weekenders 3 Stone me 4 Nodal 5 Happy-go-lucky 6 Gang-bangs 7 Opera-cloaks 8 Spews up 9 Instant 10 Veronicas 11 Noblesse oblige 12 Stonewalled 13 Yobbo 14 Opiates 23 Scourging 26 Egham 28 Nunatak 30 Outback 31 Vacation 33 Needles 35 Mascara 36 Arsenic 38 Napoleon 41 Nigella 43 Island-hop 44 Maypole 45 Standard-bearer 50 Absolute zero 52 Natal 53 Eye-catching 55 Armed forces 57 Nine to five 59 Test match 61 Mia Farrow 63 Monarch 65 Gondola 66 Eyebrow 68 Artisan 70 Chaff 73 Eagle.



HUSBAND

Pint of orange and water, please Mandy
Orange and water, not feeling well Jeff?
No, I'm fine
I just want to pour it on this guy's head and I didn't want to waste a pint of beer

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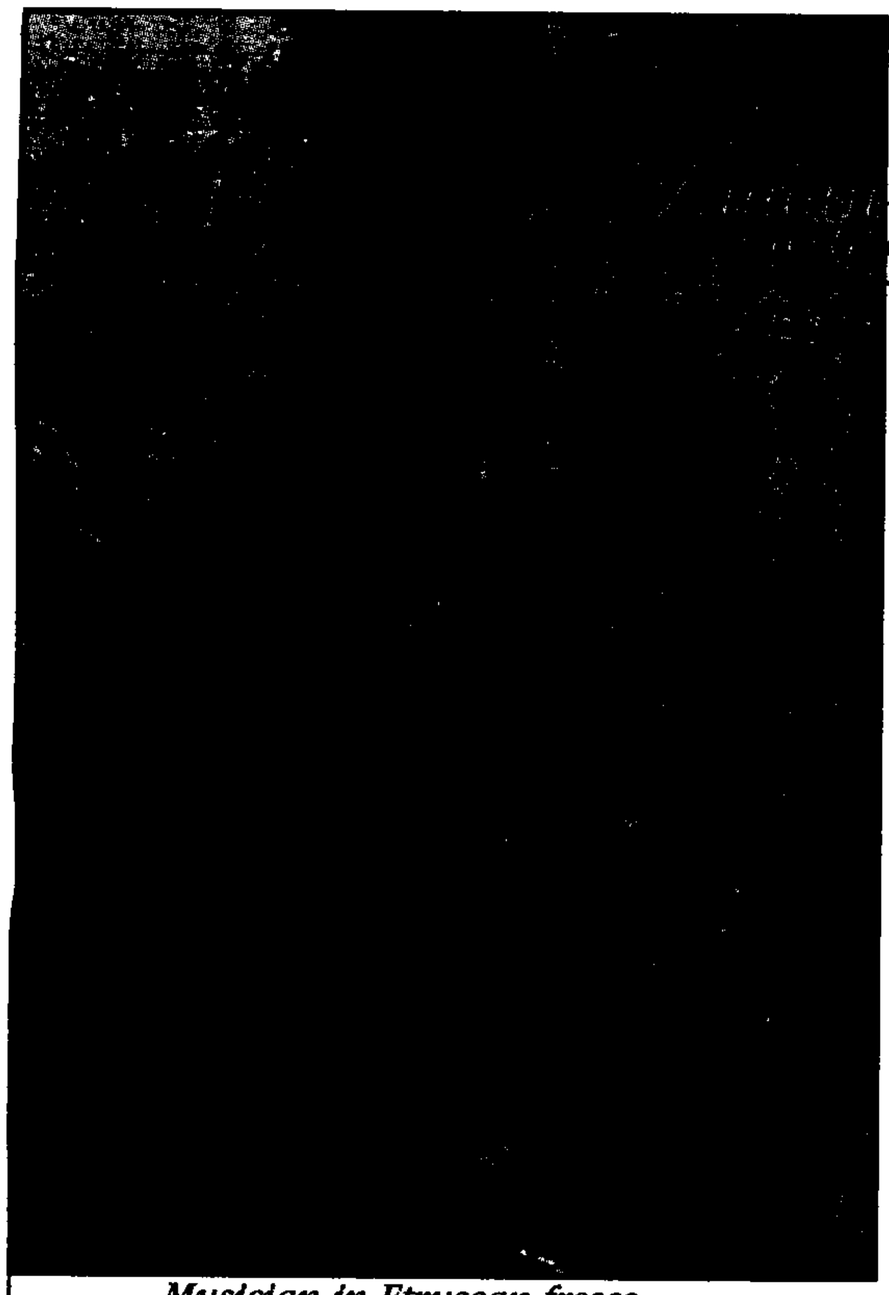

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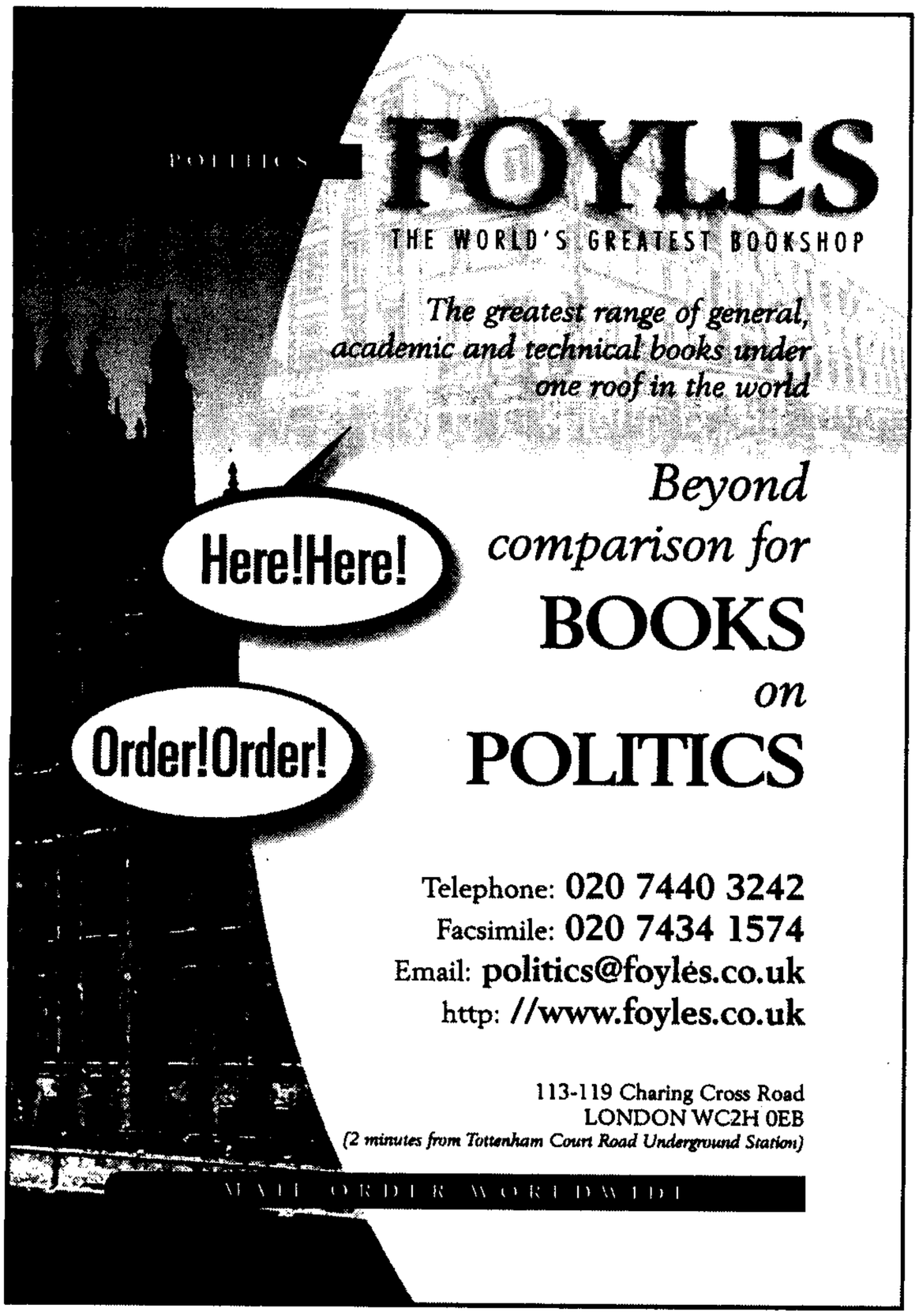

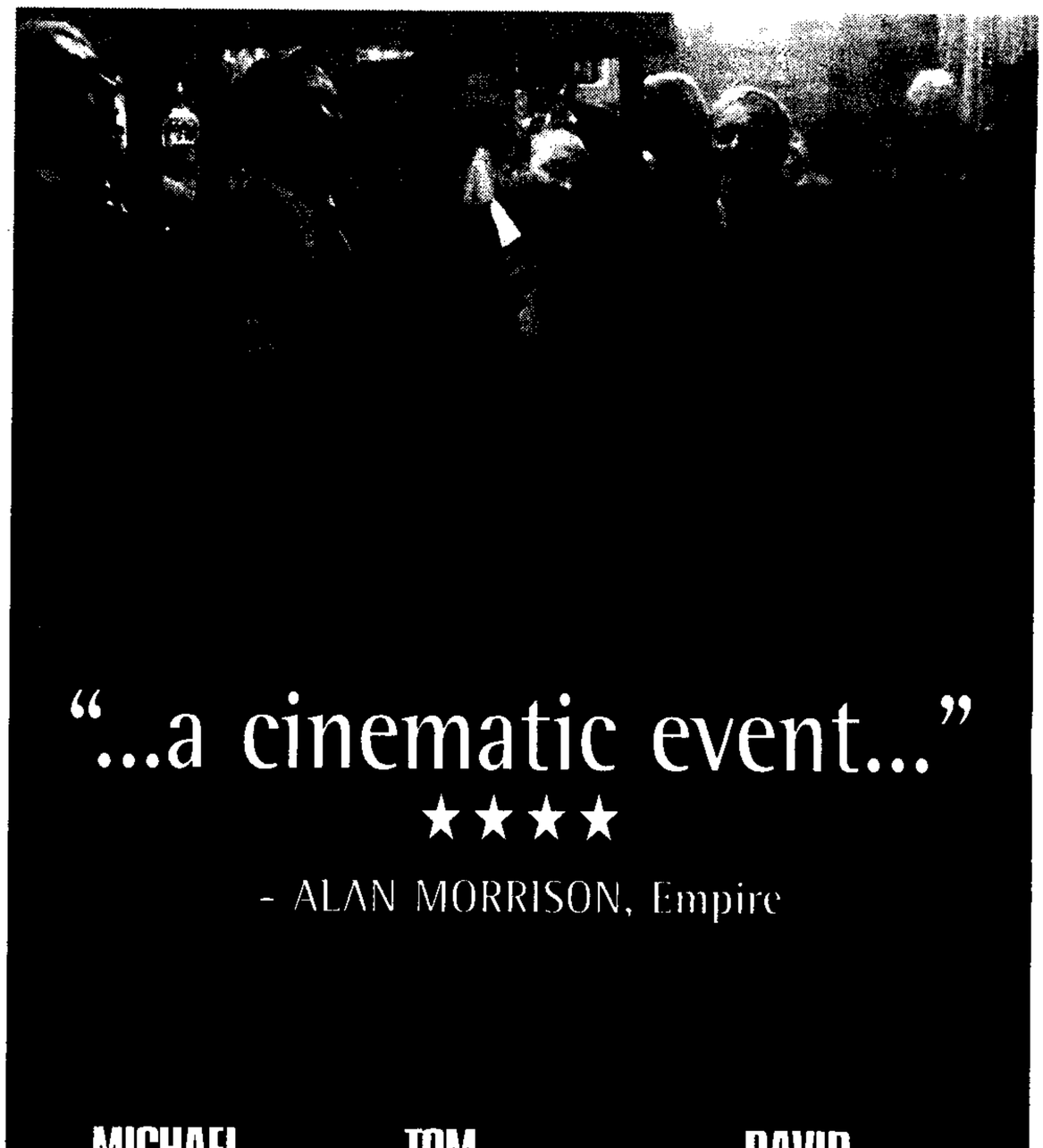

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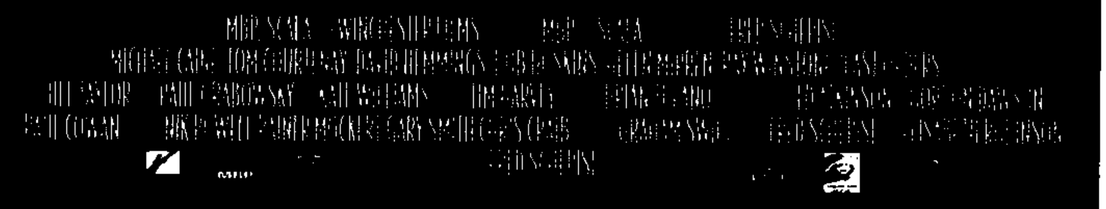

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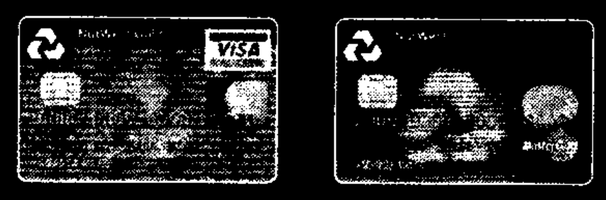

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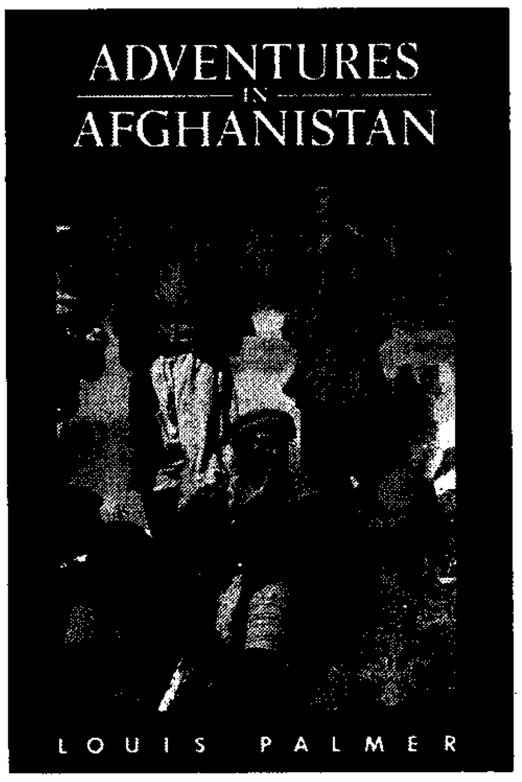

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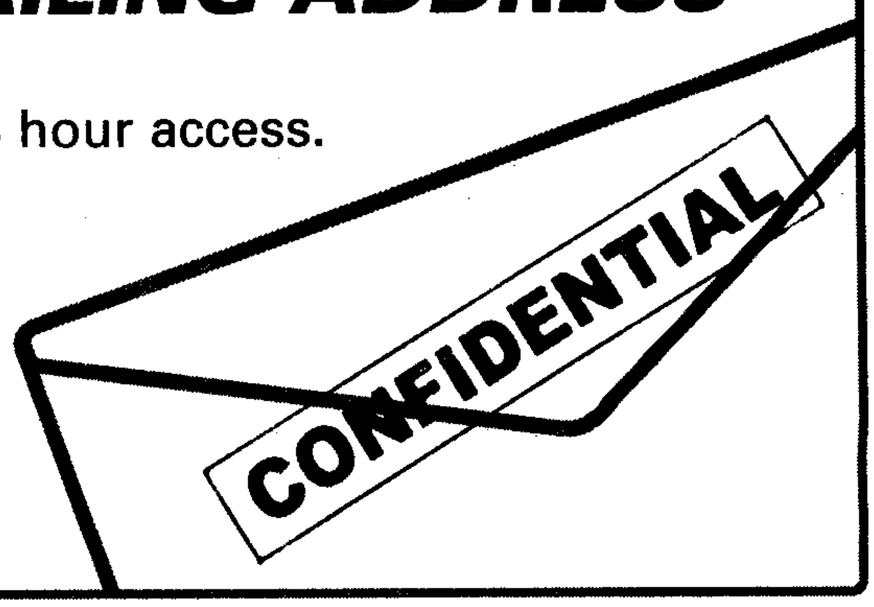

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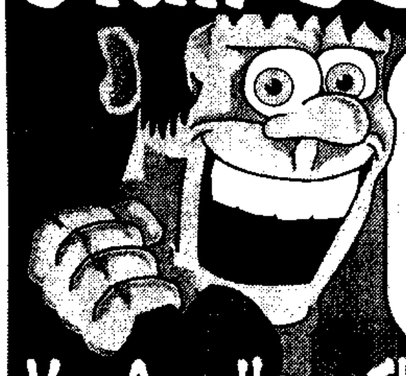

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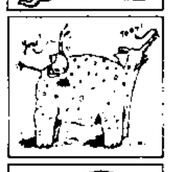

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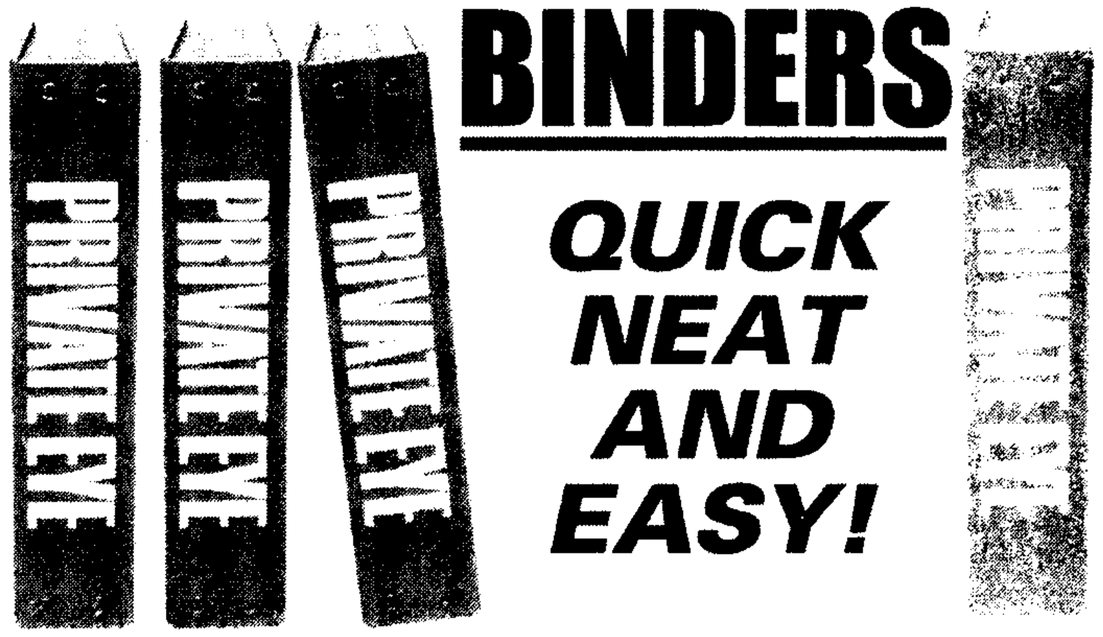

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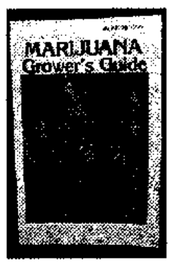

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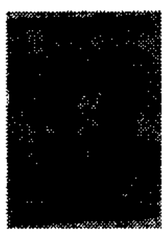

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TALL SLIM, PROFESSIONAL, BLACK MALE, 50, seeks down to earth female for companion and fun. Box 0545.

DREAM GIRL, 25, model – educated, intelligent, seeking excitement and more with caring, sharing affluent male. zaradias25@hotmail.com

NOVELIST SEEKS HEROINE – Successful, London-based male author, 53, seeks female to inspire him. novelistuk1@yahoo.co.uk or write Box 0445.

WANTED – MAN WITH PENCHANT FOR ME (female, 34) and/or: seahorses, amaretto, remote Greek islands. email: sybarite.venus@virgin.net

GOOD-LOOKING AFFLUENT MEDIA MAN, 45, seeks sexy, voluptuous, adventurous London woman to create and fulfil fantasies. robrobrob222@hotmail.com

ATTRACTIVE, INTELLIGENT, TALL, SLIM female, early forties WLTM similar gentleman 40-50 married/unmarried, gsoh for evenings and some week-ends company and entertainment, London + can travel – MswelJ@netscape.net

SLIM, SINGLE & SOLVENT SULTANA (M 34) seeks dream date (F 28-35) for currant affair or raisin to be. 0845

SLIM FEMALE GRADUATE, 29, in open marriage, seeks attractive intelligent male. E-mail: adarcy30@hotmail.com or Box 1145.

PRETTY AND FEMININE – A BIT DEBBIE HARRY TYPE – wltm nice warm man for ever. London based. Box 0945.

SINGLE? NO SKI COMPANION THIS YEAR? Cosmopolitan and professional N/S Male, 41, WLTM and join an attractive cultured lady for fun on the piste. Box 1644.

FIRM MAN (55, 5'7") seeks naughty, cute-bottomed female, North London. Box 0345.

JUNIOR DOMESTIC GODDESS seeks potential convert, Creative, curvaceous, beautiful, Oxford-educated brunette seeks kind, articulate, supportive bloke. wilde_about_words@yahoo.com.

GORGEOUS, SLIM, LEGGY BRITISH BLONDE, 32, seeks attached/unattached gentleman 45+ for mutually rewarding relationship. MOB 07740 431222.

GENEROUS, HAPPY, LITERATE professional male, 30s, WLTM female, 20-35, slim, athletic and arty. Email: george6462001@yahoo.co.uk

SULTRY SIREN, 32, SEEKS SVENGALI. Prefer single 28-42 forces welcome. Box 1045.

EDUCATED, SINGLE MAN, 35yo, WLTM older woman for intellectual and sexual stimulation. Anglia. Box 1245.

ERUDITE MAN seeks elegant mistress. Cosmopolitan, professional, tallish, slimish, fortyish, Londonish – eruditeman@hotmail.com

CO. DIRECTOR, ELDERLY, GSOH but neither tall nor good looking, more for affection than passion seeks charming lady any nationality or colour for mutually good happy house. Box 0145.

KIND, APPRECIATIVE, SENSUAL, NEGLECTED, nipple fancier, (N/S professional male), 42-60ish, with gsoh) sought by 52 year old female voluptuary – presentable, caring divorced, attractive, educated, cultured, empathic, circumspect, with vgsoh – for discreet mutual pleasures, friendship and fun. Confidentiality assured and expected. London/SE. Photo appreciated. Box 1345.

EYE SOLDIER

ARMY OFFICER, 27, charming, attractive, intelligent, adventurous and athletic, enjoys travel, dining out, cinema, skiing and sports cars seeks similar fun-loving female. Box 0443.

EYE HOME-HUNT

ATTRACTIVE SEMI-SOLVENT BAGGAGELESS P/GRAD M, 39 – seeks F anywhere for living space to write first novel. My kitchen and bedroom skills for your roof and encouragement? 07775 673031.

PINK EYE

MIDDLE-AGED MAN IN NOTTING HILL, lean, loving, not bad-looking, seeks young prince, and is willing to kiss promising frogs until he finds him. Box 0144.

DECENT, LITERATE, ROMANTIC young man seeks ally in Cambridge. Box 1244.

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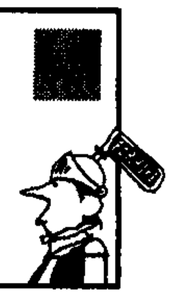

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CHRISTMAS TONES

12 Days Of Christmas	60025
Away In A Manger	60001
Come All Ye Faithful	60003
Deck The Halls	60021
First Day of Christmas	60005
God Rest You Merry	60006
Good King	60007
Hark The Herald	60009
Jingle Bells	60010
John Lennon So This Is Christmas	55126
O Come All Ye	60013
O Little Town	60012
On The First Day Of Xmas	60014
Rudolf The Red Nose	60015
Santa Claus Is Coming To Town	60016
Silent Night	60018
We wish you a Merry	60019
Wham Last Christmas	55246
While Shepherds	60017
White Christmas	60026
Winter Wonderland	60027

PICTUE MESSAGES

TOP 40 CHART TONES

Afroman Because I Got High 53198
Kylie Can't Get You Out Of My Head 73162
DJ Otzi Hey Baby 53203
Britney Spears I'm A Slave For You 73165
Michael Jackson You Rock My World 55284
City High What Would You Do 73161
Usher You Got It Bad 57058
Alien Ant Farm Smooth Criminal 53199
Steps Chain Reaction 73163
Mary J Bilge Family Affair 53213
Elton John I Want Love 55285
Samatha Mumba Baby Come On Over 53205
Star Sailor Alcoholic 53215
Jamiriquat Little L 53188
Blue If You Come Back 53220
Shaggy Dance & Shout 53221
Charlitans, The A Man Needs To Be Told 57063
Five Lets Dance 73160
Nelly Furtado Turn Off The Light 53183
Ones, The Flawless 57061
Linkin Park In The End 58024
Uncle Kracker Follow Me 53193
Bell & Spurling Sven Sven Sven 54028
Sum 41 Fat Lip 53218
Liberty Thinking It Over 53212
Bob The Builder Mambo No 5 59009
Superman Lovers & Mani Hoffman Starlight 53196
Shaggy Feat Sam Cole Luv Me Luv Me 53214
N Trance Set You Free 53204
Atomic Kitten Eternal Flame 73150
Blue Too Close 53191
Eve Feat & Gwen Stefani Let Me Blow Your Mind 53187
So Solid Crew 21 Seconds 53189
Dido Hunter 53186
Atomic Kitten You Are 73164
Destinys Child Emotion 73166
Five Closer To Me 73167
Fragma Say That You Are Here 73168
S Club 7 Have You Ever 73169

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